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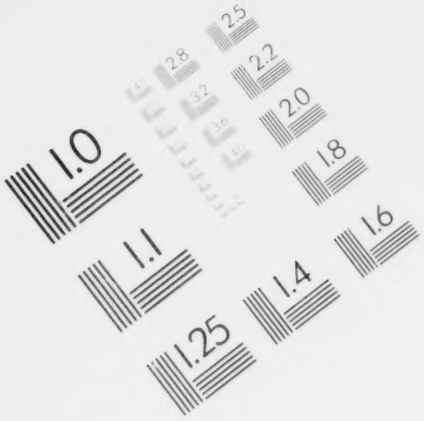

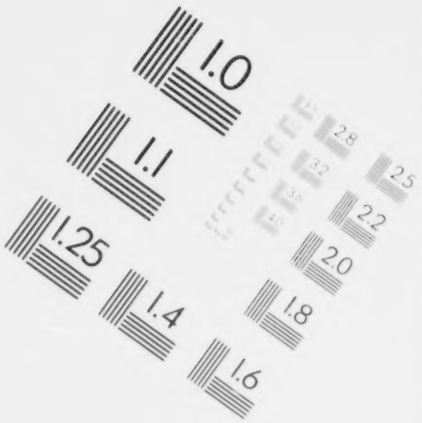

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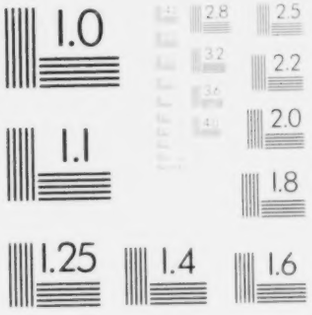

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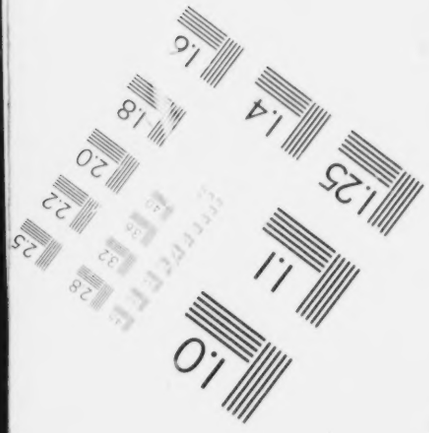

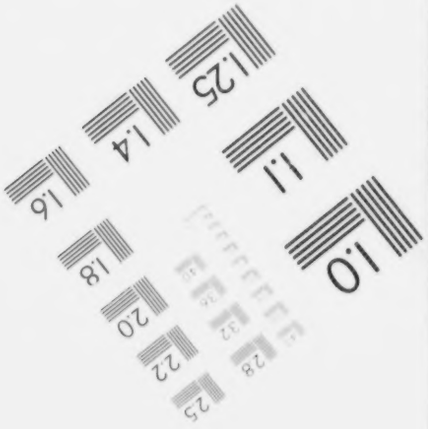

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United Nations S/PV.6265

Security Council

Sixty-fifth year

Provisional

6265th meeting

Wednesday, 27 January 2010, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Zhang Yesui	(China)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Vukašinović
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Issoze-Ngondet
	Japan	Mr. Okuda
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. Apakan
	Uganda	Mr. Lukwiya
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Mr. Wolff

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

10-22004 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Algeria, Argentina, Cuba, Egypt, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Jordan, Malaysia, Morocco, Nicaragua, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Viet Nam, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Shalev (Israel) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 22 January 2010 from the Chargé d'affaires, a.i., of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2010/44 and which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the meeting of the Security Council which will be held on Wednesday, 27 January 2010, regarding the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the meeting in accordance with the rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mansour (Palestine) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Pedro Serrano, acting head of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Serrano to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 22 January 2010 from His Excellency Mr. Paul Badji, Permanent Representative of Senegal, in which he requests to be invited, in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Paul Badji.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Badji to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 26 January 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations, in which he requests that the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Yahya Mahmassani, be invited to participate in the consideration of the item in accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 to His Excellency Mr. Yahya Mahmassani.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Mahmassani to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

I wish to acknowledge the presence of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, at today's meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, to whom I now give the floor.

Mr. Fernandez-Taranco: An extremely worrying impasse persists in efforts to bring about Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, amidst low confidence between the parties, disputes over the terms of reference for negotiations, continued creation of facts on the ground, tensions in Jerusalem, uneven developments in the remainder of the West Bank and unsustainable conditions in Gaza.

Intense diplomatic activity has continued, to try to bring about resumed negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, including United States Envoy George Mitchell's recent visit to the region. These efforts are continuing, and the parties have indicated that they are reviewing developments, but a breakthrough has not been achieved.

The Secretary-General and his Envoy are actively engaged with the parties and regional partners, and within the Quartet, in an effort to support the initiation of a meaningful process that leads to a clear endgame. The Secretary-General met Envoy Mitchell on 6 January, and we welcome Mr. Mitchell's engagement with Quartet envoys and other partners in Europe on 12 and 13 January. We also note the efforts of Egypt, which hosted Israeli and Palestinian leaders for discussions this month. Special Coordinator Robert Serry recently visited Cairo and Amman.

We believe that the Quartet can and must play its full role at this crucial juncture if obstacles are to be overcome and a process is to be resumed with prospects for success. The parties must also assume their responsibilities. Notwithstanding certain steps, Israel can and should do considerably more to build confidence through the implementation of obligations on the ground and by signalling a genuine commitment to negotiating and resolving all core issues, including Jerusalem, within a clear time frame. While we do not underestimate the difficulties and concerns involved, the Palestinians should continue to engage in earnest, as they are doing, in an effort to bring about resumed negotiations.

Despite the political impasse, the Palestinian Authority continues its efforts to advance its State-building agenda. During the reporting period, the Palestinian Authority marked the completion of its 1,000th small project since 2008 targeting underserved communities. On 14 January, Prime Minister Fayyad presented the Government's priority interventions for 2010: institution-building, strategic infrastructure and the delivery of services. We urge the international community to support that programme. The total cost is estimated at $5.5 billion, of which only 50 per cent is fully or partially funded.

The Palestinian Authority also faces a recurring budget deficit that is estimated at $1.2 billion. It is therefore in need of further budgetary support in 2010. In fulfilling outstanding pledges from the Paris and Sharm el-Sheikh donor conferences, the Palestinian Authority has requested that assistance be frontloaded and that measures be taken to ensure the predictability of financing.

The Palestinian Authority also continues to make progress in the areas of law and order and combating potential terrorism, in accordance with the Road Map. Four hundred newly trained Palestinian security personnel were deployed in Hebron in early January. Progress has been made in recent months in addressing human rights concerns in Palestinian Authority prisons.

We note positively new Israeli measures to facilitate economic activity in the West Bank. On 4 January, the opening hours of the Tarkumiya commercial goods crossing between the southern West Bank and Israel were extended to improve access for goods. On 15 January, a section of a road south-west of Hebron that connects two major routes and provides critical access for some villages to service centres was reopened to Palestinian traffic for the first time since 2001.

We urge Israel to take more far-reaching measures to facilitate Palestinian development in the West Bank, including the further easing of closures — which stand at 569 obstacles to movement — facilitating improvements in Area C and refraining from demolishing Palestinian homes. During this reporting period, demolitions left over 100 Palestinians, including 34 children, homeless.

I would like to reiterate the Secretary-General's concern about the situation in East Jerusalem. He calls on Israeli authorities to put an end to activities such as settlement construction and expansion, house demolitions, the closure of institutions and the revocation of residency rights.

As they have for nearly a decade and contrary to the Road Map, Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem remained closed during the reporting period, including Orient House and the Chamber of Commerce. Protests by Israelis and Palestinians alike against Israeli actions in Sheikh Jarrah — where several families have been evicted and a further 25 face the same threat — have continued and now take place most weeks. Seventeen demonstrators arrested on 15 January were released the following day after the Israeli court ruled their arrests illegal, but a further 20 were detained on 22 January. There are also persistent concerns with regard to settler-run archeological excavations, including tunnelling activities, in the sensitive Silwan neighbourhood, which is adjacent to the Old City. New cracks that appeared in roads after recent heavy rain have been attributed by some reports to those activities.

There continue to be official announcements of intent to expand settlement construction within the Israeli-determined municipal boundaries of occupied East Jerusalem, in areas of existing settlement and in Palestinian neighbourhoods. Those include the 692 new housing units in three existing settlements announced on 28 December, a new project announced on 4 January to house 24 settler families in the Palestinian neighbourhood of the Mount of Olives, and a plan announced on 6 January to establish 50 new settler housing units in the Palestinian neighbourhood of Shuafat. We urge the Israeli Government not to finalize the approval of those plans. The international community does not recognize Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem. The status of the city remains a final status issue for negotiations, through which a way must be found for Jerusalem to emerge as the capital of two States.

The policy of partial temporary settlement restraint in the remainder of the West Bank announced in November by Prime Minister Netanyahu is being broadly implemented. Teams of Israeli inspectors have visited settlements to verify that stop-work orders are being put into effect. However, due to the exemptions in the policy and, in some cases, the fact that construction is continuing contrary to the policy, construction activity has been reported in several settlements. On 20 January, Defence Minister Barak upgraded to university status a college in the large settlement of Ariel in the occupied West Bank, while Prime Minister Netanyahu planted trees in Gush Etzion and Ma'ale Adumim on 24 January.

Settlement activity throughout the territory occupied in 1967 is illegal, and its continuation is contrary to the Road Map. We once again strongly urge the full implementation of Israel's obligations to freeze all settlement activity, including as a result of natural growth, and to dismantle the outposts erected since March 2001. On 12 January, Prime Minister Fayyad announced that the Palestinian Authority is seeking to implement a boycott of settlement products within Palestinian areas.

Palestinian, Israeli and foreign protestors continued demonstrating in the villages of Nil'in and Bil'in, where the barrier is built on occupied Palestinian territory contrary to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. There have also been clashes between protestors and Israeli security forces.

During the reporting period, there was a substantial increase in Israeli military operations in the West Bank — 143 in total — in response to alleged security threats. Three Palestinians were killed, 87 injured and over 300 arrested, 12 of whom were found to be carrying explosives. In a serious episode, Palestinian gunmen killed a settler on a road near Nablus on 24 December. In an action strongly denounced by the Palestinian Authority, Israeli forces entered Nablus on 26 December and killed three Palestinians alleged to be the perpetrators. Palestinian security forces arrested several individuals in the course of their own investigations into the killing of the settler.

In total, there were 107 violent incidents between settlers and Palestinians during the reporting period,

which left 22 Palestinians and 18 settlers injured — partly due to the "price tag" policy to protest the Israeli Government's policy of settlement restraint. Following the evacuation of the Givat Menachem outpost yesterday, settlers attacked Palestinians and their property in the neighbouring village of Bitilu. We note that the Israeli police detained a number of settlers on suspicion of involvement in the mosque arson at Yassuf, which was reported in the last briefing. However, more must be done to impose the rule of law on violent settlers.

Turning to Gaza, as he stated on the first anniversary of Operation Cast Lead on 27 December, the Secretary-General remains gravely concerned that neither the issues that led to the conflict nor its worrying aftermath is being addressed. This has created an unsustainable situation and a sense of hopelessness for the civilian population in Gaza, more than half of whom are under 18.

Hamas remains in de facto control of Gaza, asserting security control and pushing forward its social and institutional agenda. We regret its refusal to sign the Egyptian reconciliation proposal, accepted late last year by factions of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) following an extended process of discussions, and urge Hamas to reconsider this position.

We continue to support the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank within the framework of the legitimate Palestinian Authority, and to express the hope that free and fair elections throughout the Palestinian territory can be held as soon as possible. In the meantime, with the passing of the 25 January 2010 date by which the ranks of elected officials would ordinarily have been renewed by elections, the presidency and legislature have been extended by PLO decision until elections can be held, though the legislature is unable to meet due to the internal divide.

Efforts to secure the release of Israeli captive Gilad Shalit in exchange for a number of the 9,000 Palestinians in Israeli jails have not so far achieved a breakthrough.

There was a notable increase in the number of projectiles fired from Gaza by militant groups during the earlier part of this reporting period. Over 70 projectiles of different calibres were fired, 19 of which reached Israel. There were 20 Israeli incursions and 11 air strikes against targets in the Strip, leading to 11 Palestinian fatalities, including six civilians, and six injuries. This spike in violence is worrying and underscores the fragility of the current situation. However, we continue to believe from our contacts that major constituencies wish to maintain calm. We urge all parties to refrain from violence and respect international humanitarian law.

Reports of weapons smuggling continue to cause concern. Egyptian efforts to combat smuggling have continued, including through the use of tunnel-detecting sensors and the insertion of metal sheeting in parts of the ground along the border. Goods smuggled through tunnels are both sustaining and distorting the Gaza economy. There is an urgent need for all crossings into Gaza to be opened as foreseen in the Agreement on Movement and Access.

On 6 January, during a demonstration by Palestinians in Rafah, Gaza, demanding the entry of a solidarity convoy of humanitarian aid, an Egyptian soldier was shot and killed on the Egyptian side of the border with Gaza. As the incident evolved, at least 13 Palestinians were injured on the Gazan side of the border. The Egyptian authorities have called on Hamas to ensure that those involved in the killing are brought to justice.

We repeat our call for an end to the blockade of Gaza. During the reporting period, a weekly average of 534 truckloads of imports entered the Strip, a 10 per cent decline in quantity from the last reporting period, although it is positive that in December there was a slight expansion in the types of allowed imports, with goods such as candles, brooms, eye glasses and blankets entering. There was a 13 per cent increase in the amount of cooking gas entering Gaza, although shortages remain. There has also been a limited response to the United Nations call for a winterization package for Gaza. In particular, since 29 December, and following an appeal to the Israeli Government by the Secretary-General, 57 truckloads of glass have entered the Gaza Strip as part of an Israeli clearance for a total of 100 truckloads. This has enabled more ordinary families to repair some of the lesser damage caused during operation Cast Lead. In addition, Israel permitted the export of 41 truckloads comprising nearly 2 million carnations and over 40 tons of strawberries during the reporting period, with approximately 300 tons of strawberries expected to be exported by the end of the season.

The Gaza power plant faces fuel shortages, largely as a result of funding shortfalls, and efforts are continuing to resolve this important issue to prevent a shutdown of the plant, which would have worrying humanitarian consequences. It is also vital that the entry of materials for repair of electricity infrastructure be facilitated by Israel, together with sufficient quantities of fuel.

On 1 January, citing concerns over tunnelling and the risk of attack, the Israeli authorities announced that the Nahal Oz crossing, which is used for the transfer of fuel from Israel to Gaza, will no longer be operational. The bulk of fuel imports will now pass through the much smaller-capacity Kerem Shalom crossing. With the exception of a conveyer belt at the Karni crossing used for the import of grain, it is very concerning that Kerem Shalom is now the only operational crossing for the import and export of goods into and from Gaza.

There has still been no satisfactory Israeli response to the United Nations proposal to complete stalled projects for housing, schools and health facilities. This is extremely disappointing, and the Secretary-General intends to continue to pursue this matter. We note with concern restrictions that appear to be preventing senior international visitors from entering Gaza.

Towards the end of 2009, there was an increase in impediments within Gaza due to demands from Hamas for information from aid agencies, leading to several incidents involving the confiscation or interference with aid supplies. Following interventions by the United Nations, the goods have been released and operations resumed. We will continue to insist on non-interference with international aid operations in Gaza.

On 15 January, an arrangement was concluded whereby the Government of Israel made a payment of $10.5 million to the United Nations in respect of losses sustained in the nine incidents investigated by the Gaza Board of Inquiry. In the light of this payment, the United Nations has agreed that the financial issues relating to those incidents have been brought to a satisfactory conclusion. As members of the Council are aware, the Secretary-General has written to the President of the Council informing him of this arrangement. We hope that Israel will allow the entry of sufficient materials to allow the rebuilding of the damaged United Nations buildings and facilities now that funds are available.

We continue to support all efforts towards a resumption of Israeli-Syrian negotiations, and comprehensive regional peace. United States Envoy Mitchell visited Lebanon and Syria on 19 and 20 January in the course of consultations on a comprehensive regional peace, and met with the leaders of both countries. On the ground, the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan remains stable, although settlement activity continues.

Progress in Lebanese-Syrian relations was highlighted by Prime Minister Hariri's first visit to Damascus on 19 December 2009, where he met Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad for extensive talks. The Prime Minister also visited Turkey Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and France during this reporting period. President Sleiman held talks with French President Sarkozy in Paris on 30 December.

On the security front, an explosion took place in the evening of 26 December 2009 inside a building used by Hamas in Beirut's southern suburb of Dahiye. The explosion left two Hamas members dead and wounded three others. The investigation into the incident is ongoing. Progress, albeit slow, continues to be made towards the reconstruction of the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp, which commenced on 25 November 2009.

The situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) remains quiet but fragile. On 26 December, in the vicinity of Sarda, a UNIFIL patrol observed several men digging a hole, where 250 kilograms of explosives were found by UNIFIL; the men fled as the patrol approached. Israeli air violations continued on a daily basis during the reporting period, with a marked increase in early January.

We remain deeply concerned at the current stalemate. If we cannot move forward decisively towards a final status agreement, we risk sliding backwards, with potentially profound and negative implications. We continue to urge the parties to implement their Road Map obligations, build confidence, resume negotiations on all final status issues and see them through to a two-State solution, and we believe the Quartet must play its full role in support of the process. We remain committed to an end to the occupation that began in 1967 and an end to the conflict, through the creation of a Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and security and comprehensive regional peace, in accordance with

Security Council resolutions, previous agreements, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Fernandez-Taranco for his briefing.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): We thank the Secretary-General for being with us this morning. Mr. President, on behalf of Palestine, I warmly congratulate you and your friendly country China on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and on your wise stewardship of the Council this month. We express appreciation as well to Burkina Faso for its skilled guidance of the Council's agenda in December.

On this occasion, I also extend Palestine's sincerest congratulations to the new members of the Security Council: the friendly, fraternal countries of Lebanon, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Gabon and Nigeria. We express full confidence in their commitment to the Charter and to international law and the resolutions of the Council, and we wish them all success in upholding their responsibilities and fulfilling their duties on the Council over the next two years. Likewise, I wish to express Palestine's deep appreciation to those members of the Council whose terms ended in December: the friendly, fraternal countries of Libya, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Croatia and Viet Nam. They served with consummate dedication, ability and an unwavering commitment to the pursuit of peace and security, including with regard to their efforts to address the question of Palestine in the Council.

Before proceeding, I also express appreciation to Assistant Secretary-General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco for his briefing about recent developments and the situation on the ground, which regrettably remains critical, with worsening humanitarian conditions and a continued freeze of the peace process.

The Palestinian Government has declared that today, 27 January, is the day of solidarity with our prisoners, and from this Chamber I would like to salute the thousands of our heroic prisoners in Israeli jails. We hope that the day of their freedom is not very far away.

The Palestinian people have begun yet another year facing formidable challenges and hardships. The situation on all fronts is critical due to ongoing Israeli violations of international law in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Israel's impunity and intransigence have deepened the population's distress and thwarted efforts over the past year to restart the peace process. The situation in the Gaza Strip remains grave, and the precarious situation in occupied East Jerusalem threatens to further inflame tensions and destabilize the fragile situation in the area and throughout the region.

We continue to witness unbearable human suffering in the Gaza Strip. More than a year later, the population remains traumatized by the Israeli military aggression of last winter and the brutal crimes, including war crimes, perpetrated by the occupying Power during that aggression. The ongoing illegal Israeli blockade of Gaza has only intensified the impact of the massive losses and destruction on the population, which has been prevented from recovering by Israel's deliberate obstruction of reconstruction. The humanitarian, socio-economic and psychological conditions of the Palestinian civilian population, especially of children, the infirm and elderly, remain dire and cause for great concern.

The perpetuation of this unjust, absurd situation confirms beyond a reasonable doubt that this blockade is aimed at collectively punishing and debilitating the population, young and old. This man-made disaster has impoverished the population, with abject poverty and near-total aid dependency affecting more than 75 per cent of the population. It has caused the near collapse of civilian infrastructure, including that of the rapidly decaying health, water and sanitation systems; it has caused extreme socio-economic distress in all sectors and has sown the seeds of deep despair and hopelessness, with far-reaching consequences for the Palestinian people now and in the future.

How can the world's conscience bear to continue witnessing the suffocation and deprivation of an entire people? What can justify forcing families to live in the

ruins and disaster intentionally imposed upon them? How can the international community bear to allow the continued obstruction of the great quantity of aid that has been so generously pledged to help the Palestinian people recover and rebuild and to restore their communities and some sense of human dignity to their lives?

These are questions we pose to the Council today and that we will continue to ask as we persist in pursuit of accountability and justice, including in the follow-up of the Goldstone report (A/HRC/12/48), for the war crimes committed against our people. Our common humanity and humanitarian instinct — so proudly and vividly on display when the members of the international community rise together to assist those afflicted by disaster, tragedy and human rights violations around the world with speed and compassion — demand that we not remain silent in the face of this deplorable, immoral situation.

More than a year after Israel's aggression against Gaza and nearly three years after imposition of the blockade, the Palestinian people and their leadership once again call upon — appeal to — the international community to take whatever steps are necessary to break the blockade and to compel Israel to immediately open Gaza's border crossings for the regular, sustained movement of persons and goods. This is essential for allowing the reconstruction of Gaza and economic and social recovery to finally begin, including the implementation of the Secretary-General's proposal for jump-starting reconstruction through United Nations civilian infrastructure projects, which Israel shamefully continues to reject. We reiterate in this regard that international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, and United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), must be respected.

Simultaneously, in the West Bank, the Palestinian people continue to witness and suffer from Israel's ongoing illegal seizure and colonization of their land, particularly in and around the heart of the Palestinian territory: occupied East Jerusalem. Israeli settlement and wall construction, confiscation of Palestinian land, home demolitions, provocations against holy sites, settler terror and lawlessness against Palestinian civilians and property, often upon the incitement of officials and religious leaders and including the desecration of mosques and cemeteries, and the imposition of obstructions to freedom of movement continue unabated.

Official Israeli declarations regarding the construction of new settlement units continue to be made regularly, in defiance of repeated international calls for Israel to cease all of its settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory and to comply with international law, United Nations resolutions and its Road Map obligations.

East Jerusalem remains the target of an aggressive and illegal Israeli policy aimed at altering its demographic composition, status and distinctly Palestinian character and identity, and at severing the city from the rest of the territory. In addition to settlement construction and the transfer of even more settlers to East Jerusalem, this unlawful agenda is being pursued via the expulsion or forced displacement of the indigenous Palestinian population through the demolition of homes, evictions and the revocation of the residency rights of thousands of the city's Palestinian inhabitants. In 2008 alone, Israel revoked the Jerusalem residency rights of nearly 5,000 Palestinians, forbidding them to live in the city that for thousands of them is their place of birth. The fact that this is the highest number of revocations in a one-year period since the occupation began, over which time Israel has revoked the residency rights of nearly 9,000 Palestinians, is reflective of Israel's ill intentions in East Jerusalem.

Clearly, as international consensus regarding the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and the need to resolve the question of Jerusalem as the future capital of two States continues to solidify, Israel is blatantly and arrogantly accelerating its efforts to artificially create an overwhelming Jewish majority there and further entrench its de facto annexation of the city. All such illegal actions, undertaken under a variety of arbitrary and empty pretexts, are highly inflammatory, threatening local and regional stability, stoking religious sensitivities, sabotaging resumption of negotiations and jeopardizing the two-State solution.

What is going on is unquestionably about the viability and prospects of actually achieving this two-State solution for a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and, in turn, the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole. This is genuinely endangered by Israeli actions that are undermining the viability and contiguity of Palestinian territory; the viability,

cohesion and development of Palestinian society; the viability and recovery of the Palestinian economy; the viability and credibility of and support for the peace process; and the viability and primacy of international law and our international system.

We have repeatedly called the attention of the international community to the critical situation in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory, and repeatedly appealed for action to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions. In numerous resolutions, the Council has demanded the complete cessation of Israeli settlement activities and the dismantling of the settlements, and has directly addressed Israel's colonization measures in occupied East Jerusalem, calling for an immediate halt to all such measures and deeming the changes caused by those actions to be illegal. These resolutions include, but are not limited to, 252 (1968), 267 (1969), 298 (1971), 446 (1979), 452 (1979), 465 (1980), 476 (1980) and 478 (1980).

In this regard, it should be recalled that resolution 478 (1980), inter alia, specifically deemed Israel's enactment of the so-called basic law on Jerusalem to be a violation of international law, decided not to recognize the "basic law" and other actions by Israel aimed at altering the character and status of Jerusalem, and determined all such measures and actions to be null and void, calling for them to be rescinded forthwith. Israel's illegitimate de facto annexation of East Jerusalem thus remains unrecognized by the international community to this day. Yet Israel continues to breach the law with impunity and arrogance as it continues its destructive colonization campaign.

In this regard, as was recently reaffirmed by President Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian leadership maintains that peace negotiations cannot resume while Israeli settlement activities continue. Calling for a cessation of settlements is not a so-called precondition fabricated by the Palestinian side. The position of the Security Council, the Quartet, international humanitarian law and the international community as a whole on this matter is very clear. It is a crime to forcibly seize territory, colonize it and displace or expel the indigenous population. And there is no rational justification whatsoever for allowing or accepting continued settlement activities while we are trying to negotiate an end to this prolonged, illegitimate occupation.

The reality is that Israel is actually imposing condition upon condition while it continues unlawfully to create facts on the ground in order to alter the situation in its favour and unilaterally prejudge the outcome of negotiations on the final status issues — be they Jerusalem, settlements, refugees, borders, water or security. Regrettably, over all these years the peace process has been exploited by Israel to further its colonial enterprise.

Our demands, on the other hand, are totally consistent with international law, United Nations resolutions and the Road Map obligation to freeze all settlement activities, including so-called natural growth. They are fundamental to the achievement of the peaceful settlement that will bring an end to the occupation that began in 1967; to the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security; and to a just solution for the Palestinian refugee question in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

We also reiterate that negotiations must resume from the point at which they broke off. Prolonging the suffering and loss of our peoples by starting from zero in negotiations is neither acceptable nor ethical. We all know what the solution is and should have the courage to intensify our efforts, based on the just and well-known parameters: Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the Madrid terms of reference — including the principle of land for peace — the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map.

In this regard, we welcome and appreciate efforts being made in the region and the international community as a whole to revive the peace process and advance such a solution. These include the European Union's adoption, under Sweden's presidency, of its Council conclusions on the Middle East peace process on 8 December 2009, and the diplomatic efforts being exerted by the United States Administration, particularly President Obama's Special Envoy, Senator Mitchell. We stress, however, that we must strive harder to reach our shared objective sooner rather than later, in the certainty that the peace and security benefits to our region and beyond will be enormous.

Remarkably, despite the bitter, brutal realities of the continuing Israeli occupation, including the appalling punitive measures being imposed on Gaza, the Palestinian people and their leadership remain

committed to the goal of peace. They are working hard to repair and build their national institutions and to heal and develop their society, as they strive for fulfilment of their legitimate national aspirations for self-determination and freedom in their homeland. Prime Minister Salam Fayyad's plan, "Palestine: Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State", is being pursued with determination and with wide support from the international community, for which we are grateful.

We continue to insist only that the peace we are struggling for be based on international law and that it be a just peace. Illegal Israeli actions, which are totally contradictory to the achievement of such a peace and which only fuel the conflict, must no longer be excused or tolerated. Salvaging and promoting a lasting peace on the basis of the two-State solution is dependent on that. Thus, while we welcome and recognize the importance of statements from around the international community denouncing Israeli settlement activities and other illegal measures, ongoing developments provide ample proof that statements alone will not stop Israel's settlement drive.

Serious practical measures are necessary to compel Israel once and for all to cease its colonization of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, to abide by its legal obligations, including under the Fourth Geneva Convention, and to truly commit to the pursuit of peace. In that regard, the matters of Jerusalem and the settlements are of direct relevance to this Security Council, which is charged with the maintenance of peace and security, for they are issues that directly bear on whether or not we can have peace in our region.

It is high time that the international community confront that challenge, shoring up the necessary political will to uphold international law, the Charter and United Nations resolutions, and to demand and compel Israel's compliance with them, as is demanded of all Member States. We reiterate the need for collective practical measures, and it is imperative that the Security Council effectively shoulder its responsibilities in that regard. That will dramatically alter the situation on the ground, creating the proper conditions to propel us to a new phase that will bring an end to this prolonged and tragic conflict and usher in an era of peace, security and coexistence.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Ms. Shalev (Israel): At the outset, I wish to express the condolences of the people and Government of Israel to the people and Government of Haiti, as well as to the United Nations community and to all those who lost family, friends and colleagues in the recent tragic earthquake. Israel is humbled to have provided its assistance to the global relief effort, and grieves for those who were lost and those who suffer in that catastrophe.

We are gathered here for yet another debate on the situation in the Middle East, as we are with regular frequency. While the work of the Council remains important, I wish to ask if we engage with equal frequency on other pressing global matters. I wish to ask if brief briefings — such as we have just heard from the Secretariat, partial and, unfortunately, unbalanced — serve our joint mission to advance on the road to peace. I wish to ask if such meetings can promote peace.

The Council should hear more about both sides of the conflict, where both sides have rights but all sides also have obligations. History shows that nothing substitutes for negotiations between the parties. That was the road to peace in our region — the road of President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin, the road of Prime Minister Rabin and King Hussein. Peace then was the result of direct negotiations between the parties, not of meetings of this Council, important as it is.

The only way towards peace is that we, Israelis and Palestinians, engage in serious and honest bilateral negotiations to settle the issues that divide us. I reiterate here a message that my Government has stated again and again: Israel is prepared to immediately commence direct peace negotiations.

To that end, Israel instituted an unprecedented policy of restraint throughout the settlements of the West Bank. That measure is the latest demonstration that Israel is prepared to take difficult steps for peace. We should ask the Palestinian Observer why the Authority that he represents refrains from accepting our outstretched hand to negotiate an historic peace.

In the past year, given the improving security situation across the West Bank, Israel helped facilitate considerable economic progress and growth. In that

unique environment, Israel calls upon the Palestinian Authority leadership to recognize the possibility of peace and to return to the negotiating table. In that respect, Israel salutes the relentless efforts of the United States Administration and of Special Envoy Senator George Mitchell to help facilitate the relaunching of peace negotiations.

In a region where threats are many, the international community should confront the real challenges to peace and security, namely, the threat of extremism, the danger of nuclear proliferation and the plague of weapons smuggling and terrorism.

In the Gaza Strip, the terrorist Hamas regime continues to hold hostage Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit, in contravention of his most basic rights. Hamas fails to acknowledge previous agreements. It fails to reject violence and it fails to recognize Israel.

Less than a week ago, Hamas leader Khaled Mashal proudly announced that Hamas "will never recognize the Zionist entity". Hamas continues to smuggle large quantities of weapons into Gaza. Earlier this month 20 mortars and rockets were fired from Gaza towards Israel, including a Katyusha rocket that landed south of Ashkelon, a city with a population of over 100,000 Israeli citizens.

Where are the concerned voices for peace in the face of such hatred, such smuggling and such attacks? Unfortunately, this silence is all too familiar when Israeli civilians are under terrorist attack. So let me state here clearly, as I have stated in numerous letters of complaint to the Secretary-General and to this Council, that the firing of any weapons from Gaza at Israeli territory will be met with a strong and immediate response.

In Lebanon, on 26 December 2009, near Al-Khiyam, south of the Litani River and only one kilometre from the Israeli-Lebanese border, the world witnessed the discovery of nearly 300 kilograms of sophisticated explosives, planted in close proximity to civilian infrastructure. That event, along with the explosions in Tayr Filsi and Khirbat Salim in 2009, highlights the dangerous pattern: Hizbullah remains active in southern Lebanon. Such manifest violations of resolutions 1701 (2006) merit serious attention and must be addressed in future reports of this Council.

In the face of those challenges, I extend Israel's gratitude to the positive role played by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, in particular its outgoing Commander, General Graziano. I wish the new Commander, General Asarta, much success.

Terrorism in our region is fuelled by the flow of illegal arms. Such weapon smuggling — or should I say transfer — reflects a menacing pattern by two particular Member States that use terrorist proxies to sow violence and endless bloodshed. The continued supplying of arms to Hizbullah across the Syrian-Lebanese border is a gross violation of the arms embargo, as well as of other Security Council resolutions. Israel calls upon the Security Council and the international community to remain actively seized of those matters in United Nations debates, reports and documents, for the Governments that fuel terrorism in our region represent not merely an Israeli problem, not merely a Middle Eastern problem. They represent a global problem.

In the face of such global threats, the international community has the responsibility to support those who act responsibly and to isolate those who do not. Governments and other forces must act boldly and seize the window of opportunity before us. In doing so, we will uphold values that lead to peace, justice and reconciliation.

I wish to conclude on a separate, most solemn note. Today marks the sixty-fifth anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camps. Today, we remember and honour those who struggled, those who perished and those who survived the unmatched evil of the Holocaust. As the international community reflects on the lessons of the attempt to destroy an entire nation, we must pass the torch of remembrance to generations to come. That is not only our responsibility to the past. It is our responsibility to the future.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Assistant Secretary-General Fernandez-Taranco, for his briefing on the situation in the region, which contained precise and balanced assessments of recent developments in the Middle East. Priority attention should now, as in the past, be devoted to the issue of relaunching Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, whose path has long been obstructed by a number of obstacles.

The moment dialogue ceases, diplomatic activity withers and other, highly alarming factors take over that often lead to serious upheavals in that part of the world. We therefore advocate a new start in consultations between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government.

However, in order to achieve this objective, the parties must scrupulously discharge their commitments under the Road Map, first and foremost the cessation of Israeli settlement activity, including natural growth, in the occupied Palestinian territory. The settlement issue, although under the Road Map not a precondition for the resumption of negotiations, has become a genuine barrier to Israeli-Palestinian understanding, given the objective development of events.

For that reason, the Secretary-General, the Russia and a great number of our partners, including within the Quartet, have expressed their deep concern regarding the decision of the Jerusalem Municipal Planning and Construction Committee to build new settlements and facilities in the occupied part of the city. Equally alarming is the fact that settlers are openly modifying the status quo in the historical part of Jerusalem near the holy sites of three world religions, creating a source of ongoing tension. All parties need to refrain from any step that might prejudice the outcome of future negotiations on the final status of the occupied territory.

Lasting peace cannot be achieved without resolving the problem of Gaza and the complete lifting of the blockade along its entire perimeter. Similar steps are urgently needed to address the ongoing humanitarian disaster under which Gaza's inhabitants live.

The lack of progress in the settlement process and the continuing pause in negotiations do not, regrettably, make it possible for us to announce the dates for the Moscow conference on the Middle East. At the same time, the need to convene that forum has been confirmed directly by the concerned parties, our Quartet partners and the entire international community. We are therefore pursuing preparations for the conference in cooperation with a broad circle of partners. We believe that close agreement on steps to provide international assistance for the peace process is important. The Russian Federation proposes to organize, in February in Moscow, a ministerial-level meeting of the Quartet to discuss possible opportunities to overcome the crisis in the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. It will also serve as an important step on the path to organizing the Moscow conference.

Collective efforts, including within the format of the Quartet, are currently of fundamental importance to extricating the regional peace process from its impasse. The lack of unity within the Palestinian and Israeli societies on the prospects for settlement of the Middle East conflict complicates the international community's diplomatic efforts in that respect. A clear priority is restoring intra-Palestinian unity towards the signing of an agreement on reconciliation between leading Palestinian factions, elaborated with Cairo's assistance. We support Egypt's efforts, which are playing a key role towards resolving the problem.

The Russian Federation is pursuing its contacts with Hamas, and within that framework continues to seek to convince the leaders of that movement to transcend any consideration not conducive to achieving the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. Of course, we work with all Palestinian sides, firmly convinced that without Palestinian unity based on platform of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Arab Peace Initiative, under the leading role of Mahmoud Abbas, the legitimate head of the Palestinian Authority and the PLO, it will be very difficult to achieve a final status for the Palestinians. At their meeting in Sochi on 26 January, President Medvedev of the Russian Federation held a thorough discussion with President Abu Mazen on the entire spectrum of issues related to the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations.

We are devoting special attention to developing bilateral Russian-Palestinian cooperation in the context of important economic projects and cultural, humanitarian and educational links. Palestinians are regularly educated in Russia, paid for by Government grants. Palestinian Authority security bodies are staffed with individuals trained in Moscow. We affirm our solidarity with the Palestinian people and their yearning for their own State. We will leave no stone unturned in order to assist, together with other members of the international community, in achieving a settlement in the Middle East, mindful, of course, of the fact that a final settlement must be comprehensive and include the Syrian and Lebanese fronts.

Concerning Lebanon, we welcome the existing positive momentum of developments in its internal

domestic situation, which resulted from the patient dialogue among all Lebanese parties aimed at seeking consensus. This approach is in line with the objective of strengthening the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Lebanese State.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Fernandez-Taranco for his sober and realistic briefing this morning.

Peace in the Middle East is a key objective of the United Kingdom, the European Union and the international community as a whole. We want to see an end to suffering on both sides, but it is also crucial because it resonates around the world and often stands as a symbol of the international community's failure to act, feeding resentment, fostering hatred and encouraging extremists.

Over a year after the Gaza conflict, meaningful peace negotiations must restart as soon as possible if hope is to take the place of continued frustration. We continue to fully support the efforts of the United States Administration, and especially Senator George Mitchell, to bring the parties to the negotiating table. We hope that his current efforts will lead to early progress. Recent tensions in and around Jerusalem only remind us of the consequences of failure, and we call on all parties to refrain from unilateral actions which prejudice long-term agreed solutions.

The alternative to progress is not the status quo; it is further deterioration and violence. The parties should recognize that a comprehensive peace can be achieved only through meaningful negotiations, and take all the steps necessary to enter into those negotiations. The United States is not and should not be alone in this task. The other members of the Quartet are also playing an important role. The European Union stands ready to contribute both politically and practically to a final settlement. Active Arab engagement, building on the important Arab Peace Initiative, can play a crucial role in creating an atmosphere in the region that is conducive to peace.

Both Israel and the Palestinians must redouble their efforts and avoid a hardening of positions and provocative actions. The parameters of peace are well-known: two States with an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State based on 1967 borders, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel, Jerusalem as the capital for both States, and a just settlement for refugees. Such an agreement is the only sustainable way to meet the national aspirations of the two peoples. If a lasting peace is to be achieved, a way must be found for Jerusalem to be shared as the capital of both States.

With this in mind, and while we recognize the recent moratorium on some building in West Bank settlements, we remain extremely concerned by announcements last month by the Israeli authorities of plans for further settlement expansion in East Jerusalem. These settlements are illegal. They prejudge negotiations and are counterproductive as far as Israel's security is concerned and are therefore an obstacle to peace. We call on Israel to stop creating new facts on the ground, which can only make a negotiated peace deal harder to achieve.

As for the Palestinians, a well-functioning State is an essential element of any future settlement. Therefore we support the ambitious two-year plan to develop the institutions of a Palestinian State and to prepare for statehood. The United Kingdom will continue to provide strong political and financial support for those efforts, which are delivering real change on the streets of West Bank towns. We encourage others to do the same. The prospects for statehood are undermined by divided Palestinian leadership, so we urge Hamas to unite behind the legitimate Palestinian Authority.

In Gaza, the outlook is dire. We remain deeply concerned by the humanitarian situation there. Although, as Mr. Fernandez-Taranco has reported, there has been a slight easing of restrictions on certain goods — notably glass — continued restrictions are having a damaging impact on the lives of people in Gaza. The United Kingdom is providing practical support to alleviate their humanitarian suffering, but there can be no real improvement as long as there remain restrictions on the flow into Gaza of materials essential for reconstruction.

We have heard here today that there has yet to be a satisfactory Israeli response to the United Nations attempts to restart long-standing reconstruction proposals. We urge Israel to remove restrictions on the import of humanitarian aid and reconstruction materials, as required by Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which this Council adopted over a year ago. Failure to do so merely encourages increased traffic through the tunnels, provides funding to Hamas, makes the task of detecting and curbing the flow of

weapons more difficult and generates greater anger, resentment and, ultimately, radicalization of Gazans. The combination of a more radical population and an increased likelihood of an inflow of illicit weapons will inevitably lead to violence. We believe it is in Israel's own security interests to ease these restrictions.

But Hamas also bears a heavy responsibility for the situation of innocent Gazans. Hamas must release Gilad Shalit immediately and renounce once and for all its use of violence. That includes an immediate end to indiscriminate and — as the Assistant Secretary-General has said — increasing rocket attacks that threaten the people of southern Israel, as well as the means by which those rockets are supplied.

As we have stated before, achieving peace in the Middle East is a difficult and daunting task, but there exists right now a precious opportunity to secure that peace. The United States Administration is actively pursuing a settlement. There is broad international convergence on the parameters of a settlement, and the two leaders claim to want a negotiated settlement. We understand the pressures of domestic politics on both sides, which can lead to entrenched positions and make resuming and finalizing negotiations difficult. But the current favourable international context will not last forever, and the alternative to a two-State solution is continuing conflict and suffering. Now is the time for leaders on both sides to rise above domestic politics and make the difficult choices, sacrifices and compromises that are required to secure an historic peace agreement.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Fernandez-Taranco, for his presentation. I also thank the Permanent Representative of the State of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their statements.

I will begin with some words on Lebanon. We welcome the establishment of the new Lebanese Government, which began its work after presidential declaration adopted in December. The visit to France by Mr. Saad Hariri, President of the Lebanese Council, accompanied by several ministers, was an opportunity for the French authorities to express their support for bolstering the Lebanese State and its institutions, for implementing the reforms that the country needs and for continuing the implementation of United Nations resolutions, particularly Security Council resolution 1701 (2006).

We believe that Mr. Hariri's visit to Syria is also a step in the right direction. The normalization of relations between the two countries is an opportunity for the region, and we hope it will continue and that it will go all the way. I am thinking in particular of the demarcation of the border between the two countries, in conformity with Security Council resolutions.

Resolution 1701 (2006) must be fully implemented. In that regard, contacts between the United Nations and the Israeli authorities should continue on the question of Ghajar. We believe a withdrawal would contribute to the easing of tensions in that sector.

I move now to the Israeli-Palestinian dossier, and I wish to bring out four points.

First, our objective is clearly the relaunching of the peace process. There is no other option but a return to negotiation, aimed at the creation of a viable, independent and democratic Palestinian State living side by side with Israel with secure and recognized borders based on Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. That is also the position of the European Union, as the head of that delegation will state in his remarks, with which France associates itself.

The international community should commit itself to participating in the negotiations between the two parties and to guaranteeing the parameters of a final accord that will allow both parties to re-engage. We resolutely support the efforts being undertaken by the United States. The European Union is ready to play its full role, and we will call on the Arab States to associate themselves with those efforts.

The second point is the need for progress on the ground. As those who spoke before me have stressed, settlements remain a major obstacle on the road to a solution. The decision of the Israeli Government to announce a 10-month moratorium on new settlements and on new building permits in the West Bank is a step in the right direction. However, no peace will be possible without a complete cessation of construction in the settlements, including in East Jerusalem. They are illegal. As the President of the Republic has recalled, settlements make the prospects for a Palestinian State more difficult, and they do not

contribute to Israeli security; on the contrary, they increase the dangers.

In that context, with regard to Jerusalem, all forms of provocation should be avoided. We call on the Israeli authorities in particular to cease the destruction of homes and other evictions in East Jerusalem. There cannot be a peace that excludes Jerusalem, which — as President Sarkozy said in his statement to the Knesset on 23 June 2008 — is destined to become the capital of two States.

The Palestinian Authority, for its part, should continue with its efforts to bolster the security sector and to implement the rule of law. Continuing the fight against terrorism, without mercy, should remain a priority.

Thirdly, beyond humanitarian matters that continue to be of concern to us, to forget Gaza would be a political mistake. We call for the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009), including with the immediate lifting of the blockade — which hits the territory hard with regard to humanitarian aid, commercial goods and the movement of people — but also with a halt to the illegal arms trafficking in Gaza. We regret that the State of Israel continues not to allow the implementation of resolution 1860 (2009).

We also call for the immediate release of Corporal Gilad Shalit, a matter that France follows with the greatest attention.

With regard to the Goldstone report (A/HRC/12/48), I recall the consistent position of France. International humanitarian law must be respected in all places, in all circumstances and by all parties to a conflict. That applies equally in Gaza and in southern Israel. In that regard, I recall how important it is for both parties to carry out an independent inquiry process consistent with international standards, regarding alleged violations of international humanitarian law and human rights during the Gaza crisis.

Fourthly, and finally, the international community should provide strong support to the Palestinian Authority and Mr. Mahmoud Abbas with a view to strengthening the institutions of the future Palestinian State. It is also for Israel to play its role with far greater resolve. Gestures have been made on the ground, but these remain insufficient. The Palestinians must be able to perceive that developments on the ground are moving towards an end to the occupation, including in the areas of freedom of movement and access. Here, financial support for the Palestinian Authority is an essential element which has political implications.

Yesterday evening the French Minister for Foreign Affairs chaired another meeting to follow up the international Donors Conference for the Palestinian State, which was held in Paris in December 2007. Following the Paris Conference, $5.2 billion was allocated to the Palestinian Authority. France attaches particular importance to the fulfilment of these commitments. Participants in yesterday's Paris meeting included Mr. Salam Fayyad, the Palestinian Prime Minister; Ms. Catherine Ashton, European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy; Mr. Tony Blair, Quartet Special Representative; and the Norwegian and Egyptian Ministers for Foreign Affairs. The Palestinian Prime Minister's plan, which we support, was much discussed at the meeting. That plan falls within the framework of the Paris Conference, whose outcome would be the establishment of a Palestinian State.

I repeat: our principal objective is the urgent resumption of negotiations. This involves the Israelis and the Palestinians, but we must not forget the other regional tracks of the peace process. In that regard, we are also working to create conditions conducive to a return to talks between Syria and Israel.

The international community and the Security Council have an important role to play, because the situation in the Middle East concerns us all. France is ready to fully play its role in this effort. That is why President Sarkozy has proposed a peace summit, which would support United States efforts and would support the resumption of peace negotiations; it would be prepared in consultation with all relevant actors.

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): First of all, I too wish to thank Assistant Secretary-General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco for his useful presentation.

We fully support the ongoing international efforts to reactivate the Middle East peace process, and we are contributing to them. Meaningful negotiations covering all core issues, leading to a comprehensive settlement, should start without further delay. However, we sadly observe that there are still certain issues blocking the way. We need to eliminate the remaining obstacles on

the way to peace and to put our focus on confidence-building.

In that respect, I wish to emphasize, first, the current pattern of demolition of Palestinian homes, eviction of Palestinian families and revocation of residency rights of Palestinians of Jerusalem, which is unacceptable and undermines trust between the parties. Last year set an all-time record for the number of Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem who were stripped of residency rights. In 2008, the number of Palestinians whose residency was revoked was 21 times the average of the previous 40 years. Such numbers are quite striking and give a clear idea about the scope of the current practices.

The international community does not recognize Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem. The core issues include the status of Jerusalem, and this should be settled in such a way that Jerusalem can emerge as the capital of two States living side by side in peace and security. In the meantime, many faiths meet in Jerusalem and hold the city sacred. Jerusalem reflects our common cultural heritage and unites us in our values. Therefore, the importance of preserving the demographic composition, character and status of Jerusalem, as well as its cultural and religious fabric, is great. Any unilateral act on the nature of Jerusalem can easily have much broader ramifications.

We call on Israel to put an end to the pattern of forced evictions and house demolitions imposed upon Palestinians, to refrain from any provocative action in the city and to preserve the status of Jerusalem, as required by the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Secondly, Israeli settlement activities in the occupied territories are of great concern and illegal under international law. Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 446 (1979) and 452 (1979), as well as the Quartet Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative, require Israel to withdraw from territories occupied since 1967. It is difficult to see how any agreement can be reached while the settlements continue to grow. Therefore, Israel must go beyond moratoriums which are very limited in scope as well as in time frame and meet its commitments in full. All settlement activities including "natural growth" must be ceased completely and permanently, and outposts erected since 2001 must be dismantled. Otherwise, it will not be possible to clear the way towards a peace based on the two-State solution.

One year after the Israeli operation, more than 1.4 million Palestinian men, women and children are still trapped in the Gaza Strip. Their daily lives in a tiny area are marked by power shortages, little or no running water and deteriorating health care. Mass unemployment, extreme poverty and food insecurity are steadily worsening due to the impact of the continuing blockade. The blockade prohibits exports and restricts the entry of basic goods, including food and fuel. Although Israel has announced that it would allow glass to be transported into Gaza, with other essential construction materials barred by Israel, the people in Gaza are unable to rebuild their shattered lives. More than 20,000 people displaced from their homes still live in tents or other rudimentary housing.

This cannot go on. The incomparable suffering of the people of Gaza must come to an end. Resolution 1860 (2009) must be implemented. The rebuilding of Gaza must start. The pledges made by the international community in Sharm el-Sheikh last March should be transformed into actual reconstruction. The human rights and well-being of the Palestinians in Gaza must be ensured. Unless the crossings to Gaza are fully open and there is an absolute return to normal daily life in Gaza, building confidence and making progress towards peace will be extremely difficult.

In the Middle East, we are yet again at a crossroads. The stakes are high. The framework for a negotiated settlement has already been laid out in the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative. Within that framework, we have to move forward and overcome the current stalemate.

At this critical stage, there is no alternative but to focus on the political process, eliminate obstacles, renounce violence and push forward with determination for a comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. Otherwise, as the Secretary-General has put it, we risk sliding backwards. That is a possibility that no one can afford.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to thank Assistant Secretary-General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco for his comprehensive briefing.

A year has passed since the adoption of resolution 1860 (2009), which called for a cessation of Israel's aggression against the Gaza Strip. Yet Israel continues to tighten the noose around Gaza. More than a year

after the adoption of resolution 1860 (2009), Israel continues to subject the inhabitants of Gaza to collective punishment. Indeed, Israel has neither opened the crossing points nor authorized reconstruction activities. In addition, it is limiting movement in and out of Gaza, thus depriving the inhabitants of their right to a decent life, work, water, food and medicine.

Israel's policy is a flagrant violation of not only the provisions of resolution 1860 (2009), but also of the principles and provisions of international law and international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention and The Hague regime. Israel has turned Gaza into one big prison and continues, through its illegitimate ambitions, to suppress the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to just and lasting peace and security in the region. These aspirations have been reflected in a great many Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

There are countless examples of this, and at a time when my Government is striving to implement all of the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006), Israel continues to violate Lebanon's sovereignty on an almost daily basis, by ground, air and sea. It continues to occupy the north part of the village of Ghajar, the Kfar Shouba hills and the Shaba'a farms. It also refuses to provide maps of the mines and cluster bombs that it has laid in my country. Israel continues to refuse to implement resolution 497 (1981) and to fully withdraw from the Syrian Golan to the lines of 4 June 1967. It also continues to seek to change the legal and physical status of the Golan by establishing and expanding its settlements there.

What is taking place in Palestine is even worse. Israel is trying to delude the world into believing that it wants to return to peace negotiations without any preconditions. At the same time, it is attempting to distract the international community by announcing what it calls a freeze on settlement activities for 10 months, to conceal its continued settlement policy in the West Bank, in particular in and around occupied East Jerusalem.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, claims that he is ready to resume negotiations without preconditions. At the same time, he prejudges their outcome by sticking to what he considers to be constants, thus undermining the very basis of negotiations as such. On the future of the West Bank settlements, he declared on 24 January: "Our message is clear: we are planting here, we will stay here, we will build here. This place will be an inseparable part of the State of Israel forever".

With respect to the borders, he declared on 20 January that Israel will have to maintain a security presence along the eastern side of any possible future Palestinian State. This is in addition to his previous statements rejecting the right of return of Palestinian refugees to their land, his commitment to the concept of Jerusalem as the sole capital of Israel, and his insistent demands that Palestinians and Arabs in general recognize the Jewish nature of the State of Israel, with all that these demands imply for the right of return of the refugees and the threat that they represent to the future of Arabs in that State.

By his reasoning, these are not prerequisites or preconditions, even though he refers to preconditions when Palestinians demand a comprehensive end to the settlement policy. During negotiations on the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, he justifies his settlement policy by what he calls natural growth.

The figures here will enable us to understand Netanyahu's position. Since 1991, the start of what we today call the peace process, the number of settlers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, has increased from 200,000 to close to 500,000. Under the cover of the peace process, the number of settlers has doubled because Israel refuses to abide by calls for an end to settlement activity.

Even worse is what is happening in East Jerusalem, which Netanyahu would like to keep off the table so as to enable Israel to continue the policy it has adopted since its occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967. This is a policy aimed at dismembering the city, confiscating land and property, establishing settlements, destroying houses and imposing restrictions on the inhabitants of the city in order to smother its Arab identity. Israel is clearly escalating its policy aimed at stifling East Jerusalem and changing its demographic composition and its historic and cultural character. For example, in November 2009 the Israeli Government launched the construction of 900 new housing units in the settlement of Gilo and approved during the last week of December 2009 the building of 700 new housing units in the Har Homa settlement, which was built on Mount Abu Ghneim.

Israel is continuing its settlement projects in occupied East Jerusalem. In addition to the stepping up of its settlement activity, Israel has also heightened its restrictive policies against the inhabitants of East Jerusalem through the continued destruction of houses in Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan and al-Bustan, limitations on building permits for Palestinians and the confiscation of residency permits from around 5,000 of the city's inhabitants. It continues to impose restrictions on Palestinians' freedom of faith and belief through the restrictions imposed on Muslims during Friday prayers in the Al-Aqsa mosque. The same is true of the restrictions imposed on Christians in Jerusalem at Christmas, which deprive them of the joy of celebrating Christmas in their church. Is it acceptable to prevent worshippers from entering the holy sites without an Israeli permit? This is in addition to Israeli excavations under the Al-Aqsa mosque, which threaten its foundations.

The very least that can be said about these practices is that they are a blatant challenge to international law, international humanitarian law, the United Nations Charter and dozens of resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly. All those resolutions state that occupied East Jerusalem is an integral part of the occupied Palestinian territory. All of these Israeli practices and changes to the nature of the city are null and void and are without legitimacy or legality. Furthermore, these acts carried out in East Jerusalem threaten the prospects of achieving a final settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, since without East Jerusalem there is no viable, contiguous Palestinian State, and no historic, religious, cultural meaning or importance for the Palestinian people or Arabs in general. Jerusalem is, as we say and sing, the flower of all cities. Jerusalem is not just a monument of stone or a group of hills. Jerusalem is a spiritual map. It is the path of those who have risen to heaven. It is the very symbol of international law. What the occupation accomplishes is to violate that law. It is a violation of the multiple dimensions of the city and the narrative of tolerance that it contains. That is the reason behind Lebanese President Sleiman's 12 November 2008 address to the General Assembly, speaking of dialogue among cultures, when he said that

> "... Jerusalem, the city of peace, where believers in the monotheistic religions come together, would not realize its historic mission unless the injustice imposed on its sons and on the Palestinian people as a whole is redressed and the occupation is ended." (*A/63/PV.46, p. 16*)

The path towards peace is well known. It has been charted by Security Council resolutions. All we ask is that the Council fully assume its responsibilities and work to implement those resolutions.

Mr. Wolff (United States of America): Advancing the cause of comprehensive peace in the Middle East remains one of the most important foreign policy endeavours of the United States. Our commitment to this goal in unwavering. Only through negotiations can this objective be realized — an approach that we strongly encourage the international community to support. The immediate resumption of negotiations towards a two-State solution is the only realistic way forward. It is in the interests not only of the United States, but of Israelis, Palestinians and all of the region's people. We call on all members of the Council to underscore that message publicly and with the parties.

Waiting to resume talks benefits no one. The status quo does nothing to meet the legitimate needs of Israelis or Palestinians. As Secretary of State Clinton has said, we believe that, through good-faith negotiations, the parties can mutually agree on an outcome that ends the conflict and reconciles the Palestinian goal of an independent and viable State based on the 1967 lines, with agreed swaps, and the Israeli goal of a Jewish State with secure and recognized borders that reflect subsequent developments.

Despite the difficulties and the complex political circumstances in the region, we are committed to relaunching negotiations and to the cause of comprehensive peace in the Middle East. National Security Adviser James Jones and Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell both conducted talks in the region this month. Senator Mitchell also travelled to Europe to consult with the Quartet and other key partners. High-level Egyptian and Jordanian delegations made helpful visits to Washington.

With the Israelis and the Palestinians, we have consistently pursued a two-pronged approach: first, to encourage the parties to enter into negotiations to reach agreement on all permanent-status issues and, secondly, to help the Palestinians build the economy and the institutions that will be necessary when a

Palestinian State is established. The two objectives are mutually reinforcing. Each is essential, and neither can be attained without the other. Special Envoy Mitchell will be following up with the parties in the coming days, and he will return to the region in the near future.

The Quartet has long called on all parties to uphold their Road Map obligations. A freeze on settlement activity is an Israeli obligation under the Road Map, and United States policy on this remains unchanged. We do not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. That said, we also believe that the settlement moratorium recently declared by the Israeli Government is a significant step that could have a meaningful effect on the ground.

United States policy on Jerusalem also remains unchanged. The status of Jerusalem, and all other permanent status issues, should be resolved through negotiations. We disagree with some Israeli actions in Jerusalem affecting Palestinians in areas such as housing, including the continuing pattern of evictions and demolitions of Palestinian homes. Neither party should take actions that could unilaterally pre-empt, or appear to pre-empt, negotiations.

The United States recognizes that Jerusalem is a deeply important issue for Israelis and Palestinians, and for Jews, Muslims and Christians around the world. We believe that, through good-faith negotiations, the parties can agree to an outcome that realizes the aspirations of both parties for Jerusalem and safeguards its status for people around the world.

We call on the Palestinian Authority to fulfil its Road Map obligations to ensure security, reform its institutions of governance and refrain from any acts of incitement. In that regard, we express our strong concern that a Palestinian Authority official recently attended a ceremony commemorating a terrorist who was responsible for an attack that claimed the lives of many Israeli civilians.

We were pleased to see the letter from the Secretary-General (S/2010/39) reporting that his staff continue to work constructively with the Government of Israel on issues related to the Gaza Board of Inquiry, as well as to note that the financial issues have been resolved in a matter satisfactory to the Secretary-General. At the same time, we call on Israel to reopen its border crossings with Gaza, with appropriate monitoring to address security concerns. That would allow for greater movement of people and humanitarian and reconstruction materials — consistent with resolution 1860 (2009) and the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access — thus alleviating the hardship and stress that civilians in Gaza face.

Hamas has yet to accept the principles established by the Quartet that are the building blocks of an independent Palestinian State: renouncing violence, recognizing Israel and accepting previous agreements and obligations, including the Road Map. Nor has it shown a greater interest in building a future for the Palestinian people than in its own hateful rhetoric and violence. We are also concerned about Hamas interference with international efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance in Gaza, continued arms smuggling and the launch of terrorist rocket attacks against Israel — which, it is important to recall, precipitated the Gaza conflict just over a year ago. We call for the immediate release of Gilad Shalit, who was abducted by Hamas and held since 2006.

A key component of international support for the Palestinian people comes through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). We thank Commissioner-General Karen AbuZayd for her devoted service to UNRWA over the past nine years and we welcome the appointment of Filippo Grandi of Italy to that post. We also welcome the appointment of Margot Ellis of the United States as UNRWA's Deputy Commissioner-General.

The United States is UNRWA's largest single donor. In 2009 we provided more than $267 million, including more than $116 million to the General Fund. Unfortunately, the Fund still faces severe and chronic shortfalls, which are estimated at $140 million for this year. We appreciate the efforts of donors that have provided sizable emergency support, but there is no substitute for predictable annual contributions to the General Fund. As such, we welcome the renewed commitment of the Arab League, whose members have pledged collectively to provide UNRWA with no less than 7.8 per cent of its General Fund. It is imperative that those pledges be delivered.

Let me conclude by turning briefly to the situation in Lebanon. We thank General Claudio Graziano for his service with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and we welcome General Alberto Asarta Cuevas, who begins his new assignment

tomorrow. We also recall the important contribution that all troop-contributing countries are making to this vital effort. We call upon all parties to fulfil the provisions of the Security Council's resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006).

Mr. Lukwiya (Uganda): I thank Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. I also thank the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their statements.

The peace process in the Middle East is at a delicate and critical juncture. The situation remains tense. It is therefore critical that the parties resume negotiations without delay. We commend the international and regional efforts that have been undertaken to restart the negotiations. We call on the parties to embark on negotiations with a view to achieving comprehensive peace based on the vision of two democratic States — Israel and Palestine — living side by side in peace and security.

We are encouraged by the continued efforts of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank to fulfil its obligations under the Road Map, particularly in the sectors of security and economic development. We remain deeply concerned about the continued construction of settlements and settler violence in the occupied territory. We note the announcement by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in November 2009 of a 10-month freeze on new housing projects in the West Bank. This is a positive step. However, we call for a complete freeze on all settlement activity, including natural growth.

We are concerned about the recent firing of rockets by Hamas into Israel and the air strikes by Israel into Gaza during the reporting period. We call on all parties to exercise maximum restraint and to avoid further escalation. This is yet another reminder of the need for a permanent ceasefire, as envisioned in resolution 1860 (2009).

We commend Egypt and others for the role they have continued to play in promoting intra-Palestinian dialogue. We call on all Palestinians to resolve their differences within the framework of the intra-Palestinian dialogue in order to achieve unity.

We remain concerned by the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza. However, we welcome the recent opening of the Kerem Shalom crossing into Gaza by Israel to allow some exports to leave, humanitarian goods to be transferred and some building materials to enter. However, we think that this is not enough. We call for the complete lifting of the blockade on Gaza in accordance with resolution 1860 (2009).

We are encouraged by the peaceful political situation in Lebanon during the reporting period. My delegation is concerned, however, about the incidents that continue to occur, which are likely to heighten tensions in the region. We call on all parties to fully implement resolution 1701 (2006).

Finally, the heightened tensions in the Middle East and the lack of progress in the peace process are reminders that the Security Council should remain fully seized of and engaged in support of these processes. Uganda, for its part, will continue to support the efforts of all parties to achieve a comprehensive peace in the Middle East, as envisioned in relevant Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco for his very comprehensive briefing on the situation in the Middle East. I also thank the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their statements.

Our debate falls on International Holocaust Remembrance Day. We pay homage to the memory of the victims of the Holocaust and reiterate our commitment to continuing to prevent and fight anti-semitism and all forms of racism, xenophobia and discrimination wherever they may occur.

Recent weeks have seen the one-year anniversary of the adoption of resolutions 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009), which are directly linked to the situation in the Middle East. Those two resolutions remain fully relevant today, the first because it reiterates the fundamental principles of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and the second because it sets the parameters for the ceasefire and unrestricted access for humanitarian assistance to the civilian population affected by the Israeli military offensive in Gaza in late December 2008.

Today, a year after their adoption and the end of Operation Cast Lead, we regret the non-compliance with the provisions of those resolutions and that the situation in the Middle East continues to deteriorate,

endangering the peace process as a whole. The picture that the Assistant Secretary-General painted in his briefing is not encouraging, but it should prompt us to redouble our efforts to persuade Israel and the Palestinian Authority to return to peace negotiations as soon as possible. That is the Security Council's responsibility.

The objective is known to all and crystal clear. We must achieve a comprehensive and definitive solution to the conflict in the Middle East that reaffirms the recognition of Israel's right to exist and allows the establishment of a politically and economically viable Palestinian State living in peace with Israel within secure and internationally recognized borders, pursuant to the resolutions of the Security Council, the Road Map, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The responsibility for resuming the peace process falls squarely and exclusively to the will and commitment of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The international community, for its part, has the task and responsibility of facilitating that process in order to ensure a just and lasting peace in the region. We therefore appreciate the efforts of United States Special Envoy Mitchell and his tenacity in laying the groundwork for dialogue between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. We also reiterate our support for the Quartet and call on it to pursue its efforts to establish conditions conducive to a resumption of negotiations as soon as possible.

To that end, it is crucial that both parties comply with the principles of the Road Map, which are the bases for the resolution of all outstanding matters in the conflict. We praise the efforts of the Palestinian Authority to meet its commitments in the areas of security and economic development in the West Bank. As we have heard from the Assistant Secretary-General, those efforts have begun to bear fruit. We take further note of the positive economic and humanitarian impact of the Israeli initiative to partially lift the restrictions imposed on the movement of people and goods in the West Bank. We hope that these actions are definitive and lead to the complete and irreversible dismantling of all checkpoints, which is essential to the establishment of a viable and independent Palestinian State.

We are convinced that improved living conditions for the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority's effective control over security in the West Bank are critical to achieving a lasting peace in the Middle East. Nevertheless, that will not be possible if Israeli settlement activity continues. Therefore we once again call on Israel to stop that practice as soon as possible, including the so-called natural growth, and to refrain from taking actions that may incite violence in East Jerusalem and that undermine hope of any negotiated solution. The demolition of houses, the evictions and the expansion of settlements in the occupied territories, including in East Jerusalem, violate international law and represent a serious obstacle to the peace process.

We take note of the initiative of Prime Minister Netanyahu to partially restrict the building of new settlements in the West Bank in order to promote the resumption of peace talks. That initiative is novel and cannot be ignored. However, that moratorium does not include East Jerusalem, public buildings or construction that is already underway, and so contravenes the Road Map principles.

In the current context we think that it is particularly important that Israel and the Palestinian Authority refrain from any type of action or statement that might erode the trust necessary to renew the process of negotiations based on the agreements and commitments that have previously been made between the parties. The definitive solution to the conflict also requires a concretization of the inter-Palestinian reconciliation that has been carried out with the help of Egypt. We lament the lack of progress in that matter, and we call on all parties not to abandon dialogue but rather to invest the political capital necessary for reaching the necessary agreements.

As I said at the outset, this month marks a year since the adoption of resolution 1860 (2009) — in the negotiation of which my delegation actively participated — and of the unilateral cessation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip. Despite that, the situation of the civilian population in Gaza continues to deteriorate, and the blockade that impedes access to humanitarian aid has not been lifted. Now that winter has begun, it is of vital importance that the border crossings be opened in order to avoid a humanitarian disaster and to initiate reconstruction.

The Gaza blockade fosters the illicit trafficking of materials, fuel and food and opens the door to the illicit trafficking of weapons, endangering the security

of the entire region. Proof of that has been the increase of rocket attacks against the Israeli civilian population, which in turn have led to new military responses, in a vicious circle. We condemn those acts of violence, especially those targeting civilian populations, and we once again urge all actors to respect at all times the provisions of international humanitarian law.

We are particularly concerned about a renewed spiral of violence that could have devastating effects on civilian populations. The international community should do all that it can to stop that as soon as possible. We therefore emphasize the need to establish an international monitoring mechanism that insures a lasting ceasefire, the opening of border crossings and the control of illicit arms trafficking. We support all initiatives aimed at establishing such a mechanism, including that suggested by the Secretary-General. We await the next report from the Secretary-General regarding violations of international humanitarian law and of human rights committed during the Gaza conflict.

Peace requires not just a renewed dialogue between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Efforts towards regional peace must also continue. We welcome the formation of the new Government in Lebanon and the commitment by President Sleiman and by Prime Minister Hariri and his Government to continue reinforcing the process of national reconciliation and to comply with the provisions of relevant Security Council resolutions. Lebanon's participation as an elected member of this Council reaffirms that commitment.

That is why we call on both Lebanon and Israel, and on all actors involved, to meet the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006), particularly bearing in mind recent incidents that must be investigated. We are convinced that that will strengthen the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Lebanon.

We also welcome progress being made in the process of normalizing diplomatic relations between Lebanon and Syria as a positive step of benefit to the region. We express our hope that Israel and Syria will again take up the process of indirect talks, which will make it possible to begin to resolve the pending matters and promote trust and security for both States.

Finally, Mexico, through its participation in the Security Council and also in other multilateral and bilateral forums, will continue to promote all efforts aimed at the establishment of a lasting peace in the Middle East.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): Mr. President, I congratulate you for holding this open debate on the situation in the Middle East. We very much value the participation of the wider membership in the consideration of such an important issue. I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco for his briefing. I also thank the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their remarks.

Over a year has passed since the end of the Israeli operations in the Gaza Strip, and the humanitarian situation remains a source of grave concern to all of us. Access to basic goods and services is grossly insufficient. The lack of building materials continues to prevent much-needed reconstruction, despite the recent permission for some glass to enter the Strip. Palestinians are therefore still forced to live in conditions that are simply intolerable. That must come to an end without further delay.

More than a year has passed since resolution 1860 (2009) was adopted, and the blockade has not been lifted yet. Israeli security concerns can and must be reconciled with the suspension of the blockade of Gaza. In fact, it has been argued here that Israeli security stands to gain from the lifting of the blockade, and we certainly believe so.

Another unresolved issue related to the war in Gaza is accountability. There continues to be a need for credible and independent investigations, in line with standard international practice, on the disturbing findings contained in the Goldstone report (A/HRC/12/48). We look forward to the report of the Secretary-General on the outcome of the investigations, as requested by the General Assembly. We note the payment made by Israel for compensation for the losses sustained by the United Nations during the Gaza conflict. It is disturbing and regrettable that serious incidents of this sort have taken place, and they must not happen again.

More than a year after the end of the military operations in Gaza, it is not only the humanitarian situation that is untenable. The paralysis of the peace process has also gone on for too long and risks leading to further deterioration of the political landscape. An independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State,

living side by side with Israel in peace and security, within internationally recognized borders, is long overdue.

Our challenge now is to find a way forward that will enable both parties to resume serious and result-oriented negotiations as soon as possible. My delegation understands that intense efforts are under way to create the conditions for the process to resume. The parties have the obligation to avoid any action that might jeopardize such efforts. Attempts by Israel to artificially create faits accomplis on the ground and change the demographics of the West Bank and East Jerusalem are especially unhelpful. The revocation of Palestinian residency rights, evictions and house demolitions are not acceptable. Settlement activities, including so-called natural growth, are illegal and must cease.

Palestinians should also do their part. Overcoming their divisions, keeping extremists in check and enhancing democratic governance is essential. Based on past experience, my delegation believes that future negotiations should allow for the necessary engagement of the international community. We must all remain engaged and provide the diplomatic support needed to sustain the peace process. Brazil reiterates its support for holding a comprehensive international conference on the Middle East, once conditions are appropriate.

The further involvement of relevant players from outside the region may prove beneficial. In November, in the first state visit by an Israeli President to Brazil in 40 years, President Shimon Peres met with President Lula in Brasilia. A few days later, President Mahmoud Abbas also paid an official visit to Brazil. President Lula is scheduled to visit Israel, Jordan and Palestine in March in order to follow up on bilateral discussions in a number of areas.

As we all know, there will be no peace in the Middle East without a Palestinian State, the parameters of which are well known. Its establishment is in the interests of Israelis, Palestinians, the region and the international community as a whole. We must all help the parties to translate such common interests into a politically sustainable negotiating process without further delay, with a view to reaching a peace agreement at the earliest possible time.

We welcome the formation late last year of a Government of National Unity in Lebanon. That was a vital step towards consolidating a stable, inclusive and democratic State in that country, and a very positive development for peace in the region.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): Austria would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Fernandez-Taranco for his update on recent developments in the Middle East. We also thank the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their presence and contributions to our debate. Austria aligns itself with the statement to be made by the acting head of the European Union delegation on behalf of the European Union.

Austria is gravely concerned that peace talks remain deadlocked despite the ongoing efforts, in particular those of the United States administration, to bring the parties back to the negotiation table. We urge the parties to overcome the current standstill, which plays into the hands of violent extremists rather than leaders who embrace peaceful and democratic ways to achieve the legitimate aspirations of their peoples. An independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, living in peace and security with the State of Israel, is the realization of such Palestinian aspirations, a key contribution to stability and peace in the wider region, and the best long-term guarantee for Israel's security.

Negotiations to achieve this two-State solution must be urgently resumed. Such negotiations should be pursued under an agreed time frame, respect previous agreements and undertakings, and tackle all final status issues, including borders and security, settlements, Jerusalem, refugees and water. A genuine peace requires the parties to find a way, through negotiations, to ensure the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two States. To restore their faith in the negotiation process, Palestinians need to see an end to illegal activities that create obstacles to the viability of their future State, such as the construction of settlements and the separation barrier on occupied land in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem, house demolitions and evictions.

We have taken note of Israel's decision on a partial and temporary settlement freeze. This can be seen as a first step in the right direction. However, ongoing settlement construction, the inclusion of settlements in the National Priority Area programme, and the most recent endorsement of the construction of almost 700 new settlement units in East Jerusalem put

into question Israel's overall readiness to seriously and comprehensively negotiate the settlement issue. We therefore call on the Government of Israel to immediately end all settlement activities in East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank, including natural growth, and to dismantle all outposts erected since March 2001.

We strongly encourage the Palestinian Authority's efforts to build the infrastructure and institutions of a future State that will provide opportunities, justice and security for its citizens, and address the legitimate security needs of its Israeli neighbours. Austria, both bilaterally and within the overall efforts of the European Union, will continue to assist Palestinian State-building. Normal economic activity is key to funding these efforts. We welcome steps taken by Israel to ease some of the restrictions; these have contributed to economic growth. We look to Israel for decisive reinforcement of the removal of obstacles to movement and access in the West Bank. Every job created through improved freedom of movement contributes to sustainable peace and security for all.

One year after the end of the military operations of Israel in Gaza, it is highly disconcerting to note that the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009) is still overdue. As delivery levels of basic commodities remain far below needs, Austria once again urges the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza.

We recognize the right of Israeli citizens to live free from fear and from indiscriminate attacks emanating from Gaza. And, of course, we also recognize the right of the Government of Israel to protect its population against such violent attacks. At the same time, we, like others, believe that what is still a de facto blockade is not the right instrument to achieve this goal, that it cannot be justified in view of existing obligations under international humanitarian law, and that it leads to unacceptable humanitarian consequences.

We wish to underline the continued need for thorough and credible investigations of all allegations of grave violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law in relation to the Gaza conflict. There must be accountability and an effective remedy for victims of such violations. We expect all parties to cooperate with the Secretary-General as he prepares his report to the General Assembly on their investigation efforts.

In connection with this wider issue of addressing the legacy of the Gaza conflict, we note with satisfaction that Israel has recently agreed to make a payment of $10.5 million to the United Nations in respect of the losses sustained by the Organization during the incidents that were investigated by the United Nations Board of Inquiry. We appreciate the constructive engagement of Israel in this process and hope that Israel will also consider such steps in similar cases. However, as the United Nations has rightly pointed out, providing these financial means will not of itself repair the damaged buildings and facilities. We therefore join the United Nations in its call for the unhindered and expedited passage to Gaza necessary to facilitate effective reconstruction.

In view of the recent tensions between Lebanon and Israel, Austria reiterates its call on all parties to comply fully with resolution 1701 (2006). We call on Israel to halt violations of Lebanese air space and urge the parties to avoid any rhetoric or acts that could endanger the current cessation of hostilities. In view of the discovery of explosives by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon near Al-Khiam, we also wish to underline the importance of efforts to ensure that the area south of the Litani River is kept free of unauthorized armed personnel, assets and weapons.

In conclusion, we wish to underline the shared responsibility of all parties, as well as all partners in the region and in the international community, to transform the unsustainable status quo of what can, at this stage, only be called a situation of fragile calm into a comprehensive and durable settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which also requires decisive steps towards a settlement between Israel and Syria and Israel and Lebanon.

Austria, together with its European Union partners, stands ready to support concrete and early results on the path towards a comprehensive peace.

Mr. Okuda (Japan): I would like to express my appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting on the situation in the Middle East. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Fernandez-Taranco for his comprehensive briefing.

We very much regret that we have yet to see the resumption of negotiations between Israel and the Arab

parties, including the Palestinians, despite international efforts, especially those of the United States, to resume negotiations. There seems to be only little progress on many issues that we take up with regards to the peace process. We are concerned that the longer the negotiation is not resumed, the more precarious the situation will become.

Japan would like to emphasize that we must not be discouraged from making efforts to revive the peace process and to encourage the parties to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace through negotiations. We believe that the people in the region have already suffered enough. We must endeavour to resume the negotiations, as there is no way to achieve peace other than through sincere negotiations between the parties.

We reiterate our call on both parties to carry out their obligations and commitments under the Road Map. In that regard, we consider the decision of the Government of Israel to suspend new settlement construction for 10 months as a step in the right direction. However, Japan reiterates its call on the Israeli Government to freeze all settlement activities, including natural growth, in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The status of Jerusalem is one of the core issues of final status negotiations, and we call on Israel to refrain from taking any actions that will prejudge the outcome of such a negotiation.

We encourage the Palestinian Authority to continue in its efforts to improve the security situation, which will contribute to carrying out its commitment to ending violence and terrorism. We also strongly support the Palestinian Authority's two-year plan to build institutions that will support a future Palestinian State. That effort is essential if a future Palestinian State is to be viable.

On Gaza, we call for the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009) in all its aspects. One year after the end of Operation Cast Lead, it is unacceptable that the blockade, which has created a serious humanitarian situation in Gaza, remains. We call on Israel to improve the movement of goods and people, and to cooperate with the relevant United Nations agencies. We take note of the Secretary-General's letter to the President of the Security Council on the follow-up to the Board of Inquiry into incidents in Gaza (S/2009/250). We expect that the continued dialogue will improve cooperation on the ground between the United Nations and the Government of Israel. We are also concerned about the rockets that continue to be fired into southern Israel and call on all who are responsible to immediately stop such actions, which could precipitate a far graver situation.

Palestinian unity under President Abbas is important to enable the Palestinian people to seek a negotiated solution with one voice, and we reiterate our support for the Egyptian effort to achieve Palestinian reconciliation.

Japan strongly supports the international efforts, especially those of the United States, to revive the peace process. Japan will welcome any action by Arab States that will help to create an environment conducive to reviving the peace process. Japan, for its part, will continue to work with both parties and to encourage them to take politically difficult but necessary steps for the resumption of the peace process. Japan will also continue to provide assistance to the Palestinian people to improve the humanitarian situation and to assist the Palestinian Authority in its effort to build the institutions and viable economy necessary for a future independent State.

Mr. Vukašinović (Bosnia and Herzegovina): I would first like to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, for his update on recent developments in the Middle East. We also thank the Permanent Representative of Israel, Ms. Gabriela Shalev, and the Permanent Observer of Palestine, Mr. Riyad Mansour, for their presence and contribution to our debate.

The Security Council is meeting at a time when new risks are emerging in the Middle East. These risks can potentially jeopardize the efforts of the various players focusing on enhancing the peace processes in the region. However, as has been said so many times before, while negotiation processes are crucial, lasting peace in the Middle East is urgently needed.

Therefore, at the outset, Bosnia and Herzegovina calls for the urgent resumption of negotiations that will lead, within an agreed time frame, to a two-State solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

In the wake of the first anniversary of military operations in the Gaza Strip, allow me to emphasize our grave concerns regarding the living conditions in

that area. It is discouraging that, despite the international community's calls, no progress has been made in Gaza in the past year.

Bosnia and Herzegovina urges that all possible steps be taken to ease restrictions of movement in Gaza. We call for the further sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for access to humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza. We believe in the necessity of fully implementing the Agreement on Movement and Access. Bosnia and Herzegovina strongly condemns all violations of international humanitarian law and emphasizes that the Israeli and Palestinian civilian populations must be protected.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is deeply concerned over the decision on the new settlement activities of Israel in occupied East Jerusalem. Settlements on occupied land are illegal under international law. The demolition of homes and expulsions in East Jerusalem represent a grave obstacle to the peace process. Therefore, we join the numerous calls of the international community for Israel's settlement activities to be brought to an immediate halt. We fully support United Nations activities aimed at diffusing the tensions and call on all sides to show restraint.

Bosnia and Herzegovina considers that securing lasting peace and stability in the Middle East region is possible only through diplomatic efforts and full commitment to the peace process. Hence, we urge that both the Israelis and the Palestinians immediately start unconditionally to implement their obligations, stipulated by the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, including land for peace, the Road Map and the agreements previously reached by the parties, as well as the Arab Peace Initiative. In that context, we would also like to commend the efforts of the Quartet, the mediation efforts of Egypt and the Arab League, as well as other international factors seeking to contribute to the peace process.

Bosnia and Herzegovina considers that the regional context is of great importance. A comprehensive peace in the Middle East must include a settlement between Israel and Syria and Israel and Lebanon.

The political progress made in Lebanon since the new Government was formed late last year is commendable. Bosnia and Herzegovina welcome the efforts of the Lebanese Government in the field of political, social and economic development.

Regarding the Syrian track, we welcome the willingness demonstrated by Israel and Syria to advance the peace process. As a part of our strong commitment to comprehensive regional peace and stability, we fully support all efforts aimed at reactivation of the talks between the two countries.

In conclusion, Bosnia and Herzegovina reiterates the urgency with which Israelis and Palestinians must resume the peace negotiations. Such negotiations are of utmost significance for progress towards a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Issoze-Ngondet (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I wish to congratulate you, Sir, for having organized this important meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. Furthermore, I thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, for the clarity of his briefing and the enlightening information he provided to the Council. Of course I thank the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their statements.

As you are aware, Sir, the multiple crises in the Middle East, more specifically the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, have for many years polarized the attention of the international community. For many reasons, that region of the world has become a strategic area and now seems in large part to determine the future of global security. It is unfortunate to note that despite the many efforts made towards peace and stability in that region, all types of frustrations and humiliations continue to undermine the effectiveness of any prospect for peace and development.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is no exception to that sad assessment. Indeed, negotiations on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process are again at a major impasse. More than two years after the international donors conference held in December 2007, the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip remains very worrying, particularly because of the blockade of Gaza. In resolution 1860 (2009), adopted 8 January 2009, the Security Council called for the lifting of that measure in order to allow humanitarian aid and commercial goods into Gaza without hindrance and to allow individuals to move about freely.

We must also respond to Israel's legitimate security concerns by taking drastic measures to prevent the entry of illicit arms into Gaza and to halt the firing of rockets on Israeli civilians.

Gabon hopes for the rapid resumption of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations for a genuine and lasting peace based on respect for the principles agreed by the parties and on implementation of the rules of international law. In other words, we support the vision of a Palestinian State coexisting with the State of Israel within secure and internationally recognized borders, in conformity with the Road Map adopted in 2003 and relevant Security Council resolutions.

To revitalize that perspective, my country invites the Quartet to step up its efforts in order to lead the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to resume dialogue in good faith. We strongly back France's initiatives aimed at achieving that goal and at promoting peace in the region. We also support the efforts of the United States and Russia directed at both parties with a view to a durable negotiated settlement of the conflict.

The creation of a Palestinian State is an unavoidable step to make the peace process successful. To that end, the international community should increase the aid afforded the Palestinian Authority to assist it in its programme to strengthen the institutions of a future State. We urge the United Nations to continue to work for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, basing its efforts on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008), as well as on existing agreements and a number of peace initiatives.

My country also pays tribute to the good offices of Egypt and all the other countries participating in the Arab Peace Initiative with a view to a political settlement of the conflict and a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. As the futures of Israel and Palestine are closely intertwined, only frank, ongoing, direct dialogue between the two parties will make possible lasting solutions to the conflict.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on the situation in the Middle East. I also would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Fernandez-Taranco for his insightful and comprehensive briefing. Our thanks go to the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their very useful statements.

It is a matter of great concern that despite years of engagement and efforts by the international community to find a lasting and comprehensive solution to the Middle East crisis, including the Palestine question, the problem remains intractable. Today, not only is the peace process deadlocked; tensions are rising in East Jerusalem and violence is reported in Gaza. The prospects for the resumption of peace talks are further hindered by the political uncertainty in Palestine, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, arms smuggling into Jerusalem and, more importantly, by settlement activities.

It is within this framework of daunting challenges that we welcome the positive developments enumerated by the Assistant Secretary-General in his statement. In particular we note the payment of $10.5 million by the Israeli Government to the United Nations in respect of losses sustained by the United Nations last year during Operation Cast Lead.

We also welcome the efforts of the United States through its Special Envoy, Senator George Mitchell, to restart substantial peace talks in the region. In the same vein, we appreciate other initiatives, including the Middle East Quartet, the intra-Palestinian talks brokered by President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and the Arab Peace Initiative. Indeed, the decision by Prime Minister Netanyahu to suspend settlement activities for 10 months provides a window of opportunity that we must seize.

Nigeria remains firmly committed to the Middle East peace process, particularly the aspiration to a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. We reaffirm our support for a two-State solution with both Israel and Palestine living side by side within secure and recognized borders and respect for the agreed borders of 1967. We know that progress requires achievement of core benchmarks encompassing peace talks, settlements, the humanitarian situation in the occupied territory and the issue of access to and movement in Gaza.

It is evident that following Operation Cast Lead, the political will of both parties to come together for negotiations is visibly lacking. Despair must now give way to optimism and concrete, credible engagement. We therefore join other delegations in calling for the urgent resumption of the peace talks as a means of building confidence between the parties. The need to move forward with the political process in order to

consolidate the gains of past efforts has never been so critical.

As speakers before me have stressed this morning, freezing settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is critical to the resumption of dialogue and to the entire peace process. We therefore reiterate our call on Israel to adopt all possible measures to stop settlement expansion in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, including natural growth.

On the abject humanitarian situation in the occupied territories, we encourage Israel to remove the obstacles to access and to facilitate the movement of people and goods into the Gaza Strip, consistent with the Agreement on Movement and Access. The inhabitants of the territory, especially women and children, are dependent on aid as their means of livelihood, whereas they should be engaged in gainful economic activities. Immediate steps must be taken to alleviate suffering. We encourage Israel to allow the recommencement of the stalled United Nations projects and other donor projects in the area.

The human rights violations committed by both sides during Operation Cast Lead have also not been adequately addressed. We therefore call on both sides to conduct credible domestic investigations into the many reported allegations.

We also call on Palestine to continue its unrelenting efforts to set up a functioning State structure and to strengthen its security capacity in order to address the incessant arms smuggling and other threats to Israel. We believe that an intensified intra-Palestinian dialogue will lead to domestic peace and security.

As the world commemorates International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, we wish to echo the ideals for which the United Nations stands and to call for a concerted effort to rekindle the spirit of collective existence, as enshrined in the Charter, in order to save the people of the Middle East — and indeed the whole world — from the scourge of war.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

We are deeply concerned over the stalemate in the Middle East peace process and the bleak prospects for resumption of the peace talks. We hope the parties concerned will strengthen their belief in the peace talks, overcome the difficulties and interruptions, create favourable conditions for an early resumption of the peace talks. Israel should freeze all settlement activity and cease the building of the separation wall. Israel should also refrain from moves that do not contribute to resumption of the peace talks on the issue of East Jerusalem.

The humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory remains a serious challenge. The parties concerned should earnestly implement Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and renounce violence against civilians. We urge Israel to open all the border crossings to Gaza and ensure that the region achieves reconstruction as soon as possible and that its people can return to normal life.

Internal reconciliation in Palestine is of critical importance. We hope all factions in Palestine will bear in mind the long-term interests of the nation and will work together to strive for the success of the Middle East peace process. We support the efforts made by Egypt in this regard.

The international community should redouble its efforts to push for all parties to build the momentum for negotiations. We hope the Quartet will play a bigger role in facilitating the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. We also hope the Security Council will contribute more significantly to the Middle East peace process.

China supports the achievement of the goal of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative, the principle of land for peace and the Road Map. China will continue to make constructive contributions, along with the rest of the international community, to the achievement of the two-State solution and comprehensive, just and lasting peace and development in the Middle East.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Pedro Serrano, acting head of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Serrano: Let me start, Mr. President, by thanking you for inviting the European Union (EU), in its capacity as a Quartet member, to participate in this open debate. The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia

and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Montenegro and Serbia and the European Free Trade Association country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia, align themselves with this statement.

We have listened carefully to the presentations and statements just made. The resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict remains a central political and strategic objective for the European Union. On the occasion of the first Foreign Affairs Council meeting, in December 2009, following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, EU Foreign Ministers discussed in depth the current situation in the Middle East and the way forward. During this discussion the following points were emphasized.

A resumption of negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, now absent for more than a year, is of utmost urgency. These negotiations, however, must be focussed and result-oriented. The negotiations must respect international law as well as previous agreements and understandings. They must include all final-status issues, including borders, Jerusalem, refugees, security and water, and must lead, within an agreed time frame, to a two-State solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

The European Union will not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties. The European Union supports the ongoing efforts of the United States towards a resumption of negotiations, which are closely coordinated among Quartet partners.

The European Union stands ready to contribute substantially to post-conflict arrangements aimed at ensuring the sustainability of peace agreements. We appeal to others to join in this important task. In the meantime, the European Union continues its work as a key contributor to Palestinian State-building, in line with the Palestinian Authority's government plan. Our field missions and our work within the Quartet contribute to this. In this context, I would like to emphasize the efforts deployed by Quartet Special Envoy Tony Blair to promote Palestinian economic development and institutional governance of the future Palestinian State.

The European Union welcomes Israel's steps to ease restrictions on movement in the West Bank, which have made a contribution to economic growth. Further and sustained improvements of movement and access have to follow. Many checkpoints and roadblocks remain in place. The Palestinian Authority, for its part, must build on its efforts to improve law and order.

The European Union took positive note of the decision of the Government of Israel on a partial and temporary settlement freeze. The European Union sees this as a first step in the right direction and hopes that it will contribute towards a resumption of meaningful negotiations. At the same time, the European Union reiterates that settlements and the separation barrier, wherever it is built on occupied land, as well as demolition of homes and evictions, are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-State solution impossible. The European Union urges the Government of Israel to immediately end all settlement activities in East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank and including natural growth, and to dismantle all outposts erected since March 2001.

The European Union is particularly concerned about the situation in East Jerusalem and calls on the Israeli Government to stop all discriminatory treatment of Palestinians there. The European Union recalls that it has never recognised the annexation of East Jerusalem. If there is to be genuine peace, a way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two States. The European Union calls for the reopening of Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem in accordance with the Road Map.

One year ago, the Gaza hostilities came to an end and the Security Council adopted resolution 1860 (2009). However, the situation continues to be of grave concern. Full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009) is urgent. The EU further emphasises the importance of appropriate and credible investigations into possible violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law by the parties to the conflict, in accordance with international standards. A continued policy of closures has deeply affected life in Gaza, has led to the devastation of its economy and is politically counterproductive. The European Union maintains its call for an immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of the crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and

from Gaza. While extremists stand to gain from the current situation, the civilian population suffers.

The European Union is well aware of and fully recognizes Israel's legitimate security needs. Gaza must not be a platform for violence against Israel, and arms smuggling must stop. The European Union calls for the release of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, who has been held captive for more than three and a half years.

The separation of Gaza from the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, remains a matter of serious concern. The EU therefore calls on all Palestinians to promote reconciliation behind President Abbas and to support the mediation efforts by Egypt and the Arab League, in order to prevent a lasting and detrimental division.

A comprehensive peace must include a settlement between Israel and Syria, and Israel and Lebanon. Concerning the Syrian track, the European Union sincerely hopes that the 2008 talks can soon be resumed and brought to a conclusion.

A comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict requires a regional approach, and the EU therefore calls on all regional actors to take confidence-building measures in order to stimulate mutual trust. An active Arab contribution, building on the Arab Peace Initiative, is of crucial importance. These views are shared among all Quartet partners.

Let me close by confirming the determination of the European Union to work with its partners in a reinvigorated Quartet to achieve the two-State solution. I would like to express the hope that this debate, held at the beginning of a new year and indeed a new decade, will mark the beginning of a political development that will finally lead to the solution of this conflict.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): As there are 24 more speakers on my list, I propose, with the consent of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting and resume at 3 p.m. sharp.

The meeting was suspended at 1 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.6265 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Sixty-fifth year

Provisional

6265th meeting

Wednesday, 27 January 2010, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Liu Zhenmin	(China)
Members:	Austria	Ms. Juen
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ms. Marinčić
	Brazil	Mr. Moretti
	France	Mr. Kassianides
	Gabon	Mr. Onanga Ndiaye
	Japan	Mr. Arima
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Mexico	Mr. Puente
	Nigeria	Mr. Adamu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Turkey	Mr. Dizdar
	Uganda	Mr. Kamahungye
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Afshar
	United States of America	Ms. Schedlbauer

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting resumed at 3.10 p.m.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes, in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I now give the floor to the representative of Oman.

Mr. Al-Hinai (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Arab States in my capacity as its Chair for the month of January.

In its various dimensions, the situation throughout the occupied Palestinian territories is extremely serious. That is due to illegal Israeli practices, in particular in the Gaza Strip, which has been besieged in an illegal and inhuman manner for more than two years. As a result, the economy has been paralysed and there has been a dramatic impact on the health and the social and daily lives of more than 1.7 million civilians, whose lives are literally falling apart. We continue to receive reports of the situation in Gaza, the most recent of which came from the World Health Organization. All of them refer to the gravity of the situation, which poses a threat to both the life and health of innocent civilians in the Gaza Strip because of Israel's ongoing siege.

A year has elapsed since the barbaric and brutal military attack led by the Israeli occupying force in Gaza, which resulted in wide-scale destruction. The attack killed or injured thousands of Palestinians, including hundreds of women and children. That barbaric Israeli aggression served to increase the suffering of civilians, the impact of which we continue to see today in destroyed property and loss of Palestinian lives. The occupying Power is also preventing all attempts to rebuild and rehabilitate after the horrors perpetrated in December 2008.

Through repeated incursions and military attacks, Israel, the occupying Power, is attempting to destroy all efforts to revitalize the peace process. That is also fuelling conflict, violence and tension, which will have dramatic implications and pose a serious threat to one and all. Moreover, those actions illustrate the attitude of the Israeli leadership towards the United Nations, international law and Palestinian civilians living under occupation.

Acts by the occupying authorities have reasserted the idea of impunity and disregard for international law. It is also quite clear that the Israeli leadership attaches no importance whatever to the outcome of the work of the Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, as evidenced by their repeated threats to launch an additional military attack against the civilian population in Gaza, which would be illegal and barbarous.

It is therefore necessary that the international community, including the Security Council, assume their responsibilities in this regard. It is necessary to defend the international order and to assert the international will that was expressed in resolution 1860 (2009) by ensuring that Israel implements the resolution. The Security Council must also address and directly condemn Israel's attacks on civilian lives, as well as its violations of international humanitarian law.

If we remain on the sidelines while those threats and attacks continue, the Israeli occupying authorities will be encouraged to add additional crimes to the list of war crimes that Israel has already perpetrated. Women, children and older persons in Gaza continue to suffer from the last Israeli war. They demand that a just and moral position be adopted, one that is based on the decisions of the international community, in particular those of the Security Council.

The Arab Group would like to underscore the gravity of the situation in occupied East Jerusalem as a result of the illegal steps and measures taken by Israel, the occupying Power. The situation there is worse now than at any time during 40 years of occupation. There has been a change in the demographic profile, the legal status and nature of the city as part of an attempt to create a new reality on the ground. That jeopardizes any final solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Before everyone's eyes, the Holy City is being subjected to an illegal aggressive policy by the Israeli occupying authorities seeking to control occupied East Jerusalem and ensure a Jewish majority there in a completely artificial way that excludes and displaces Palestinians, who were there from the very beginning. Palestinians are being forced to leave by having their identity cards taken, while more Israeli settlers are brought in. We see that reflected in statements from Israeli Government officials that assert that Jerusalem is, and will continue to be, Israel's capital. That is clearly and fully in violation of international law and

United Nations resolutions, which since 1967 have reiterated that the use of force to acquire territory is unacceptable.

Moreover, the occupying Power is continuing to establish settlements. The barrier that is being built, the closing of Palestinian institutions and the heightened acts of provocation at or near Holy Sites in Jerusalem, including the archaeological work that is threatening the foundations of Al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as the Church of the Nativity, are all illegal. They serve to raise tensions and inflame feelings, and they have the potential to worsen the tense and fragile situation in the occupied territories.

The international community, including the Security Council, must therefore address the situation before it is too late, firmly reject acts of provocation and take immediate and decisive steps to ensure that Israel implements international law, including its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention. There is no alternative to that; any other approach will imperil the peace process and the stability and security of the entire region. There can be neither negotiations nor peace unless we address the issue of Jerusalem.

We would like to reiterate that Israeli measures to change the legal, demographic and physical status of the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and the infrastructure there are null and void. Israel is attempting to establish and enforce its legal and administrative power in the Golan. Such efforts are also null and void. We also reiterate that all those acts and measures, including the building of Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan, constitute a provocation of the entire international community. They also violate international law, the Charter of the United Nations and resolutions of the Organization, including Council resolution 497 (1981), and the Fourth Geneva Convention.

We call on the Security Council to assume its responsibilities and compel Israel to implement resolution 497 (1981) and fully withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967. The Arab Group condemns Israel's ongoing disregard of resolution 1701 (2006) as it violates Lebanon's sovereignty on the ground and from the air and the sea. It continues to occupy the northern part of Al-Ghajar village, the Shab'a farms and the Kfar Shuba hills. Israel's obstinacy extends to refusing to provide information on cluster bombs and landmines planted in south Lebanon.

The Arab Group supports Lebanon's request that the international community ensure Israel's implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and the transition from a situation of aggression to a total ceasefire. We have demonstrated the earnestness of our approach to the peace process through a variety of initiatives, including the Arab Peace Initiative, which was warmly welcomed internationally — except by Israel, which continues to ignore it eight years after it was launched.

The Arab Group welcomes all the efforts to relaunch the peace process in full earnest and reiterates the fact that the political process and the opportunity to open balanced and serious negotiations can begin only with the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from all Arab lands to the 1967 boundaries in order to create an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. That will require that the international community, including the Security Council, seriously adopt a clear platform and a firm position in that regard that are critical to addressing Israel's illegal practices.

We must ensure in particular an immediate end to settlement activities in Jerusalem and all Palestinian territories, without exception. We must return to the legal terms of reference: international law and United Nations resolutions, particularly those regarding Jerusalem. The situation of refugees must also be resolved equitably, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). A time frame must be established for the completion of those negotiations. All this must be accomplished under effective international supervision.

These are not conditions; they are the starting point that every peace process requires. They have been endorsed by the international community and are based on the various terms of reference of the peace process, including the resolutions of the Security Council. To achieve these objectives, the international community, including the Security Council, must meet its direct responsibilities and intervene effectively and tangibly in order to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to adhere to international law and to its international responsibilities.

The first political necessity is to end all settlement activities, particularly in and around Jerusalem, and the incursions into Palestinian territory

and to lift the siege of Gaza. That will lend some credibility and seriousness to the political process, which is currently hindered by Israel's illegal practices on the ground and the international community's inability to act.

There is no excuse for the failure of the international community and the Security Council to take the measures and adopt the positions necessary to end all of this — the settlements, the incursions, the assassinations and the imposition of a new status quo. During George Mitchell's visit to the region, the Israeli Prime Minister told him that a university was to be built in the illegal settlement of Ariel, in the northern West Bank. That is being undertaken under the very nose of the international community.

The feverish settlement process has expanded seventeen times since the peace process was launched following the Annapolis Conference. Attempts to Judaize Jerusalem continue apace, with the destruction of houses and the transfer of the offices of international and non-governmental organizations. I could go on and on, listing all these aggressive Israeli policies.

Israel is totally out of control and is trying to resolve all these issues by continuing to occupy Arab lands, which naturally would undermine any negotiating process and hinder any future progress. What chance is Israel offering while it is destroying any basis for a future Palestinian State and preventing us from reaching any solution to the situation whatsoever? That was manifest, for instance, in the statement by the Israeli Prime Minister to the effect that Israel will remain in the West Bank and the Al-Aghwar region.

The Group of Arab States therefore calls on the international community, the Security Council and the Quartet to establish conditions conducive to peace by taking measures and adopting a clear and resolute position to protect the political process from the manoeuvring of the Israeli Government, which claims to seek talks but wants them to be completely insubstantial. It refuses to make any commitment and continues to defy the international community's efforts to salvage the peace process by continuing settlement activities in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Israel continues to ignore the terms of reference of the peace process, including resolution 1515 (2003), which enshrines the Road Map and calls on Israel to put an end to all settlement activity.

Given these very serious developments, we reiterate our firm rejection of all illegal acts and measures by the occupying Power, which are null and void. The international community and the Security Council must assume their moral and legal responsibilities for the Palestinian people until a just solution can be found and their suffering and the historic injustice done to them are over. The influential international stakeholders must take measures that go beyond timid rhetoric and good intentions. The occupying Power must be made to face up to its responsibilities and stop forthwith its illegal activities, which destroy any hope for the establishment of an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian State living in peace with its neighbours within the borders of 1967.

The international community must therefore demonstrate the firm resolve and the political and diplomatic will to meet the situation squarely. It must not remain silent or continue to respond ineffectively and out of all proportion to the gravity of the situation. Such a response reflects a kind of tacit support and license for developments on the ground and clearly violates the resolutions of the Security Council and international law.

The time has come to oblige Israel, the occupying Power, to end its illegal settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories and East Jerusalem and return to compliance with international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. This is a most serious issue, with severe consequences for international peace and security and for an inevitable peaceful solution.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): I have the pleasure to address the Security Council today on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and to begin by expressing our thanks to Assistant Secretary-General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco for his comprehensive briefing today, as well as NAM's sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for attending that briefing today, stressing the importance of the subject under discussion and the urgency of our debate today, which comes at a crucial time when the peace process faces one of its most difficult stages in the international effort to realize the two-State solution and to put an end to the occupation of the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories since 1967.

The current crisis of confidence is a direct result of Israel's refusal to move decisively towards a political endgame and to implement its obligations according to United Nations resolutions and the Road Map, starting with a total freeze on all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

Despite all credible and serious efforts by the Quartet and the regional partners to relaunch negotiations and to achieve comprehensive peace in the Middle East through the attainment of the two-State solution and the Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, a just and lasting settlement to the question of Palestine is still visibly far from being achieved due to Israel's positions and continued defiance of international law and Security Council resolutions.

As such, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, remains critical, continues to deteriorate and needs serious attention from this body to overcome the current impasse and to press on for the early resumption of the negotiating process. This critical situation has been recognized widely by neutral observers and the world's media.

The international community must be resolute in demanding that Israel abide by all its obligations under international law and cease all of its violations and unlawful measures, including its policy of collective punishment of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and its illegal settlement activities, and that it unambiguously negotiate and resolve all core issues — Jerusalem, settlements, the refugees, borders, security and water — in a comprehensive manner and within a fixed time frame.

Regrettably, since the last Security Council open debate on this issue in October 2009 (see S/PV.6201), Israel, the occupying Power, has failed to abide by its obligations and continues to impede efforts to resume peace negotiations by refusing to freeze all settlement activities and by continuing to impose unilateral measures aimed at altering the status, demographic composition and Arab nature of the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly East Jerusalem. Moreover, Israel has not refrained from measures that prejudice the outcome of negotiations on the final status issues, thus undermining confidence, inflaming tensions on the ground, preventing any progress and raising questions about Israel's credibility as a partner for peace.

The unacceptable decision of the Government of Israel to restrain rather than to cease completely all settlement activities, and even to exclude East Jerusalem from the scope of this unilateral decision, falls considerably short of Israel's obligations under Security Council resolutions, the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Road Map, particularly because settlement activity does not just violate international law but undermines trust, aims at prejudging the outcome of the future permanent status negotiations, and imperils the basis of the two-State solution. The Non-Aligned Movement condemns Israel's deliberate policy regarding the construction of more new settlement units and the continued Israeli declarations in this regard in defiance of repeated international calls to stop all settlement construction and activities.

In this regard, in the short period since the unilateral declaration by Israel on settlements, Israel has announced the construction of more then 1,600 new units, particularly in Jerusalem, in addition to the construction of thousands more already under way. The international community must use its political tools, including the Security Council, to take necessary measures to bring Israel into compliance.

The Non-Aligned Movement expresses deep concern regarding the extensive damage caused by the Israeli settlements, the separation wall and the inhuman network of checkpoints, which are severing the Palestinian territory in the occupied West Bank into separate cantons, isolating East Jerusalem, undermining the contiguity, integrity, viability and unity of the Palestinian territory, and jeopardizing prospects for achieving the two-State solution.

Further, the Israeli authorities continue to discriminate against the Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, including by revoking identity cards and allowing violent Israeli settlers to attack Palestinians and confiscate their homes, properties and land, as well as to devastate their agriculture and desecrate their places of worship. The ongoing Israeli measures in occupied East Jerusalem have not only inflamed tensions in the holy city, but also have the potential of endangering the already fragile stability in the region as a whole.

Meanwhile, the unresolved crisis in Gaza also continues to have negative repercussions on all efforts

to advance the peace process and inflicts unacceptable suffering on the fabric of civilian life in Gaza. Israel continues to impose a blockade on the Palestinian civilian population, depriving them of their humanitarian needs and preventing Gaza's reconstruction one year after the unlawful attack in December 2008, in violation of international humanitarian law and United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and General Assembly resolution ES-10/18, adopted at its tenth emergency special session. The Non-Aligned Movement demands that Israel immediately lift its illegal blockade and allow the immediate and sustained opening of all border crossings to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and to ensure its urgent reconstruction. The Non-Aligned Movement again stresses the urgent need immediately to begin reconstruction in Gaza and deeply condemns the obstruction by Israel of the import of essential reconstruction materials into Gaza, as well as Israel's negative response to the United Nations proposal to kick-start civilian reconstruction activity.

Further, the Non-Aligned Movement calls on Israel to compensate the Palestinian people for the damage and trauma they suffered during its military aggression on Gaza last year, along with compensating the United Nations for the human and material losses that occurred in that attack. The Non-Aligned Movement also reiterates its call for the restoration of the situation in the Gaza Strip to that which prevailed prior to June 2007, and stresses the importance and urgency of achieving Palestinian reconciliation and unity. In this regard, the Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its support for every effort to achieve a speedy Palestinian reconciliation, including Egyptian and regional endeavours to realize the just and legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people, with all its political groupings.

Turning to Lebanon, the Non-Aligned Movement remains deeply concerned over Israel's ongoing air and land violations of Lebanon's sovereignty, in breach of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), and calls on Israel to withdraw fully from the remaining occupied Lebanese land in the Shab'a farms, the Kfar Shuba hills and the northern part of Al-Ghajar village.

Concerning the occupied Syrian Golan, the Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms that all measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan and its institutional structure, as well as the Israeli measures to impose jurisdiction and administration there, are null and void and have no legal effect. The Non-Aligned Movement demands that Israel abide by Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967, in implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The Non-Aligned Movement has repeatedly warned of the danger and consequences of the ongoing Israeli measures in the region. It is vital at this juncture that the international community intervene and take a robust and united position in order to strengthen the process and to reaffirm the clear terms of reference for negotiations on all core issues that are grounded in the United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and the agreements reached between the parties, starting with a total freeze on settlement activities.

Accordingly, the Non-Aligned Movement remains committed to supporting all endeavours that aim at ending occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and security, in accordance with the established parameters of the peace process, as defined by Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008); the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace; the Arab Peace Initiative; and the Road Map. The Non-Aligned Movement calls for serious and concrete actions from the Security Council in this regard.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I call on the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Núñez Mosquera (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this very important meeting of the Security Council. We also thank Mr. Fernandez-Taranco for his briefing this morning.

We have to acknowledge the fact that little progress has been made since the last time the Security Council reviewed this question. The situation in the Middle East, and particularly in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, continues to be a matter of great concern. The ongoing illegal occupation by Israel of Palestinian and other Arab territories remains the major obstacle to

achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region.

Cuba reiterates its deep regret over the continued suffering of the Palestinian people under Israel's brutal military occupation and colonization for more than 40 years, as well as the fact that they continue to be denied their basic human rights, including the inalienable right to self-determination and the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their lands, in accordance with international law and General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

In flagrant violation of international law, and contrary to the objectives of the peace process, the occupying Power continues its illegal construction of settlements and the wall throughout the West Bank and, in particular in and around East Jerusalem. Cuba is deeply concerned about Israel's continued demolition of Palestinian homes and eviction of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem, as well as other illegal acts of incitement, provocation and aggression by extremist settlers against the Palestinian population and holy places, which have made the present situation very unstable and dangerous.

The enormous physical, economic and social devastation that these illegal and destructive practices have wrought has a profound effect on the peace process and could also prejudice the outcome of an agreement on Jerusalem's final status. The situation in East Jerusalem is increasingly difficult and perilous. Israeli settlement activities are accelerating, and more than 5,000 people have lost their homes. The Palestinian population of East Jerusalem is growing, but they are forbidden to build and are forced to live in slum conditions, deprived of their most basic human rights.

The situation in the Gaza Strip following Israel's brutal attack a year ago continues to be of great concern. Israel's imposition of closures and restrictions to the free movement and access of people and goods, including humanitarian and medical supplies, has made the area's recovery and reconstruction practically impossible, and has also aggravated already precarious levels of unemployment and poverty. The ongoing siege in the Gaza Strip has left a million and a half people living under constant threat of death and deprived of the most basic services. More than 20 civilians have died so far this year because of Israeli hostilities, while 11,000 homes have been destroyed and hundreds of thousands are forced to live outdoors.

Cuba calls once again for Israel to lift its illegal blockade and allow the entry of supplies of all kinds into the Gaza Strip, enabling reconstruction to begin. These measures and policies carried out by Israel are serious, flagrant breaches of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, as well as the Advisory Opinion of 9 July 2004 of the International Court of Justice. Israel must forthwith cease all its offences against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and meet its obligations under international law, particularly international humanitarian and human rights law.

Cuba reaffirms that every measure or action taken by Israel with the purpose of changing the legal, physical or demographic condition and the institutional structure of occupied Syrian Golan, as well as any measure taken by Israel in order to impose its jurisdiction and administration over that territory, are null and void and carry no legal weight. We also reaffirm that all those measures and actions, including the illegal construction and expansion of Israel settlements in the Syrian Golan since 1967, are violations of international law, international agreements, the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations, including Security Council resolution 497 (1981), and of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and are in defiance of the international community. Cuba demands that Israel withdraw completely from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967.

Israel cannot be allowed to continue to act with impunity. It is able to do so only because of the support it receives from the super-Power. Cuba supports the quest for a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and reiterates its hope that the current efforts will put an end to the occupation of all Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, and enable the establishment of an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I call on the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Kleib (Indonesia): Mr. President, let me begin by expressing my delegation's appreciation to you and the members of the Council for convening this open debate on such an important issue. We also wish

to thank Assistant Secretary-General Fernandez-Taranco for his briefing. My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and with the statement to be delivered later by the representative of Syria on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

It has now been one year since the Israeli military incursion into the Gaza Strip. My delegation reiterates its endorsement of the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (A/HRC/12/48). In this regard, Indonesia looks forward to the follow-up to the adoption on 5 November 2009 of General Assembly resolution 64/10. There is no doubt that Israel's excessive and disproportionate use of force and its policy of collective punishment are crimes against everything we stand for: the values of humanity and respect for the sanctity of the Charter. They are clear violations of international law and international humanitarian law. These are such sad and depressing circumstances when we, communities of democracies, communities of nations, are forced to act as bystanders. The list of the suffering of the Palestinian people caused by Israeli action is long and continues to grow by the day, the week and the year.

The irony of this issue is that the Council has abundant patience in taking its time to solve this very important question. Yet, when it comes to some other issues, it lacks patience and endurance. It acts decisively and with vigour, and we highly commend such "impatient" acts of the Council. We certainly wish that this impatience could be imposed on the Palestine issue.

While recognizing the multifaceted nature of the Middle East conflict, let me highlight two issues.

First, the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip has continued to deteriorate since the end of the Israeli military incursion. The situation is pathetic because it is man-made. For years, Palestinians have deliberately been denied the true recovery and economic growth to fulfil their potential. The humanitarian suffering caused by the illegal blockade and the closure of the Gaza crossings by the Israeli authorities are well chronicled and are unacceptable. Indonesia therefore joins other countries and the Secretary-General in calling on Israel to end its policy of mayhem and to fully respect international law.

Secondly, Israel's settlement policies and practices, which are aimed at altering the demographic composition, physical character and status of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, are nothing but a blatant violation of international law. As the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories continues and as Israeli settlers keep encroaching further into the territories, Palestinians watch with horror as their land claims disintegrate before their eyes, thus making a viable Palestinian State very difficult.

Israel must stop all settlement construction, expansion and planning in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and dismantle the settlements built therein, in compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. The settlement issue is the greatest obstacle to the peace process.

The conflict in the Middle East has indeed continued for far too long. The illegal Israeli occupation since 1967 has made the region a theatre of tension and violence. For many years, Indonesia has joined the international community in drawing attention to the consequences of Israel's continued illegal activity in the occupied Arab territories. We thus support the current surge in diplomacy, aimed at relaunching negotiations and jump-starting a comprehensive peace process, including the ongoing efforts of the United States.

We also recognize the role of the Quartet in promoting solutions to the conflict in the Middle East. Not least, we have consistently recognized the contribution of countries in the region and of the League of Arab States to Middle East peace efforts, including through the Arab Peace Initiative.

Unfortunately, the Security Council's own record on the issue has been less than sterling. The Security Council must, and indeed can, exert a positive influence on the Middle East peace process.

A truly comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East also requires a solution on the Israel-Lebanon and Israel-Syria tracks. My delegation therefore wishes to once again express its deep concern about Israel's ongoing land and air violations of Lebanon's sovereignty, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006). We call on Israel to withdraw fully from the remaining Lebanese occupied land. We wish to make a similar call for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan, in implementation of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Finally, we wish to reaffirm our full support for a two-State solution that envisions the creation of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with its neighbours. We fervently hope that 2010 will be the year when the international community fulfils its obligation to the Palestinian people and a year of remarkable progress and transformation in the history of the Middle East.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Loulichki (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to say how pleased my delegation is to participate in this meeting under the presidency of China, with its principled and patient stance on addressing the various issues before the Security Council. I would also like to thank Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his comprehensive briefing on the latest developments in the Middle East region.

The Security Council's regular monthly briefing on this issue comes at a time when the already dire humanitarian situation in Gaza is deteriorating and in the shadow of the lack of any sign of negotiations resuming in the near or medium term. My delegation would like to endorse the statements made by the representatives of Oman on behalf of the Arab Group, Syria on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. Given the responsibilities of His Majesty the King of the Kingdom of Morocco as Chair of the Al-Quds Committee, I would like to focus in my statement on the dire situation in Jerusalem and that of its Palestinian population owing to the Israeli authorities' determination to implement their plans seeking to change its heritage and its demographics and to seize Arab homes and property in that holy city.

With the ceasefire that followed the adoption of resolution 1860 (2009), the international community had hoped that Israel would put an end to its practices and halt the collective punishment of the Palestinian people and, indeed, its continuing attempts to impose a de facto situation and to annex Palestinian land, acre after acre. However, the opposite happened. Settlement activities have continued illegally in the West Bank, with Israelis seizing more Arab land and forcing Arab inhabitants to leave their homes to be replaced by Israeli settlers.

Regarding Jerusalem, Israel continues its policy of Judaization by confiscating more land in Arab neighbourhoods, persisting in building new units and facilities in the illegal settlements in Jerusalem, continuing to build the separation wall that divides Jerusalem's Arab inhabitants from their natural, political and demographic environment, demolishing homes and confiscating residency permits. Israel continues to target Islamic holy sites in the city through suspect archaeological excavations, by building a network of tunnels below the holy Al-Aqsa mosque on empty pretexts and by preventing worshippers from safely entering places of worship.

Over the past three months, we have followed with grave concern the increasing pace of land seizures in Jerusalem. Many statistics and documented reports are available, stating the number of Jerusalem inhabitants whose identity cards were withdrawn in 2008. During the same period, the Israeli authorities continued to issue permits to build new housing units in the illegal settlements in Jerusalem. Those unilateral and provocative acts seek to change the legal and demographic status of the holy city and obliterate its identity, violate international law and add to the tensions in the area, thus creating an explosive situation that could obstruct any progress towards the two-State solution advanced and advocated by the international community.

The Kingdom of Morocco draws the international community's attention to the dangerous situation in Jerusalem and the other occupied Palestinian territories. At the same time and based on the same responsibilities, commitments, international legal instruments and resolutions, it calls for wisdom and logic in addressing every aspect of the question of Jerusalem, which is of interest not only to Muslims, but to all those who follow monotheistic religions and are actively engaged in this world.

On that basis, we are concerned about the dangerous developments in the issue of Palestine and their impact on security and stability in the Middle East. Those concerns are counterbalanced only by our firm belief that the peace process is an inevitable choice and that its success is in the common interests of all the peoples of the region who wish to live in peace, harmony, cooperation. On the basis of that commitment, the Kingdom of Morocco will continue to work for peace in the Middle East. As a member of the committee to follow up the Arab Peace Initiative, it

takes part in all international negotiations towards a permanent and comprehensive peace that would include the final status issues, especially Jerusalem, as a major focal point of any possible solution.

The Kingdom also follows with great appreciation the efforts of United States President Barack Obama and his Special Envoy Senator Mitchell to overcome difficulties in the Middle East peace process. We look forward to these and other efforts to achieve the desired objective of restarting negotiations.

It is high time that the international community, the Security Council and the leading influential countries assume their responsibilities and prevail upon Israel to remove the obstacles to the negotiations and respond to efforts to resume the peace process, which must lead to a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East and transform Jerusalem from a centre of conflict into a centre where the two States of Israel and Palestine can coexist side by side in peace and security. Such a just and comprehensive solution can be achieved only through Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories, including the Golan Heights and the rest of the occupied Lebanese territory.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): I wish to thank you, Sir, for having organized this open debate at a time when the situation in the Middle East is of the greatest concern to my delegation and to the international community, due to both the ongoing tragic situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and the lack of progress towards resuming the peace process.

My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of the Sultanate of Oman on behalf of the Group of Arab States and of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as that to be made by the representative of Syria on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Since the debate held by the Council in October 2009, (S/PV.6201) the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, has continued to deteriorate. Israel's unremitting resolve to create faits accomplis in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip appears increasingly to resemble a comprehensive and deliberate policy aimed at making the colonization project permanent and thus casts serious doubt on the true intentions of Israel's leaders, in contrast to their stated intention to resume negotiations with a view to achieving a sustainable peace agreement.

Precisely one year after the Israeli withdrawal, the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip has continued to worsen despite the Council's adoption of resolution 1860 (2009) and the remarkable international mobilization in favour of its reconstruction. Yet Gaza's return to the status quo ante, characterized by the entrenchment of the blockade, has in fact prevented reconstruction work from getting off the ground and Israel continues to hinder the movement of people and the delivery of humanitarian aid and construction materials, thus preventing the resumption of normal life and increasing the already high levels of poverty and unemployment.

United with the Palestinian people and faithful to its approach to their just cause, Algeria has continued to call for an end to Israel's sinister plan, which seeks to impoverish and starve an entire sector of the Palestinian population and to cut it off from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory and from the international community.

With equal urgency, Algeria condemns the illegal and provocative measures taken by Israel in East Jerusalem in an unacceptable attempt to violate the city's age-old identity as a symbol of tolerance and dialogue and its status as the crossroads of the three revealed religions. It is particularly alarmed by the pursuit and development of a methodical policy of expropriation, intimidation and colonization aimed at strengthening Israel's control over that Palestinian city by altering its Arab nature and establishing a fait accompli on an issue related to the final status negotiations.

With the exception of Israel, the occupying Power, the international community in its entirety does not acknowledge the legitimacy of Israel's unilateral claims to the holy city, which remains an integral part of the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel and whose fate is necessarily linked to the entire question of Palestine. The Security Council must reaffirm that the illegal unilateral measures taken by Israel to modify or attempt to modify the demographic composition, nature and status of the city are null and void under international law and must be condemned as such.

Because of Israel's obstinacy, the peace process is deadlocked and the objective of a two-State solution appears more elusive than ever. No significant progress has been made towards guaranteeing the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to establish a viable, independent State based on relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet Road Map. The international community, which has continually shown signs of exasperation in the light of Israel's deceitfulness and evasive responses, must find the means necessary to extricate the process from its current stalemate. Without minimizing the importance of resuming the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations called for by all, we note that no one desires meaningless negotiations to serve as a smokescreen for certain undeclared intentions aimed at perpetuating the status quo.

In our view, successful negotiations require three conditions to be met. First, the Israeli Government must commit itself sincerely and unequivocally to a two-State solution, underpinned by concrete improvements in the situation on the ground, beginning with the cessation of all illegal activities. Secondly, we must ensure respect for the terms of reference echoed and validated by United Nations resolutions, and which make up the indisputable elements of any settlement framework. All efforts must therefore seek to eliminate the remaining obstacles on the road to peace. Lastly and thirdly, we must define a clearer role for the Quartet, whose main task is to give positive momentum to the process by protecting it from the ups and downs of power struggles.

Algeria remains committed to any initiative that would put an end to Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territory and other Arab territories, and the establishment of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, living in peace with its neighbours within the parameters laid out by a settlement with a view to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, established by resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002) and on the basis of the principles of the Arab Peace Initiative, in particular the principle of land-for-peace.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Wetland (Norway): Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing us to speak. In his briefing to the Security Council on 24 November 2009 (see S/PV.6223), Assistant Secretary-General Haile Menkerios stated that Israeli-Palestinian negotiations had reached "a deep and worrying impasse" and that without a political horizon, destructive forces would gain ground, putting both the Palestinian Authority and the two-State solution in peril.

This morning, Assistant Secretary-General Fernandez-Taranco delivered what was, in fact, the same message. Consequently, two months have passed and little has changed in reality, notwithstanding partial measures on the ground, of which we have taken positive note. Unfortunately, we have to acknowledge that the current conditions do not yet allow for the resumption of final status negotiations.

This is not to say that we can simply give in to the seemingly insurmountable obstacles to getting the negotiations restarted. Inaction is clearly not an option. Other efforts must still be made to drive the process forward towards a two-State solution. We hope that the parties will respond positively and proactively to parallel endeavours by the international community to overcome the current political impasse in the peace process.

All along, steps in the right direction in some areas of the occupied Palestinian territories should not be reversed by detrimental action in others, including East Jerusalem. As for Gaza, the unacceptable and counterproductive grip holding the civilian population down must urgently come to an end.

As Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians, Norway has repeatedly stressed the need for a clear political horizon in order to justify the high levels of international donor support to the Palestinian State-building project.

On the economic track, the donor community remains committed to the effort to build a Palestinian State from the bottom-up. The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee has given its strong and unanimous support to Prime Minister Fayyad's plan for preparing for Palestinian statehood within two years. The implementation of this work is ongoing, in close contact with and coordination between the Palestinian Authority and the donor community. The plan thus forms an important platform for continued international support, notably within a set time frame. To keep the two-State solution clearly in sight, it cannot simply be

relegated to some distant and uncertain future, and the momentum must be upheld.

Mr. Bui The Giang (Viet Nam): I thank you, Mr President, for convening this open debate during this very first month of the year. I also thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Fernandez-Taranco, for his important briefing.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by Ambassador Abdelaziz of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

This month last year saw the adoption by this Council of resolution 1860 (2009) as a result of intensive negotiations among concerned parties following Israel's offensive on 27 December 2008 in Gaza. A year later, assessments of the situation in the Middle East once again attest to its severity on multiple fronts. No substantive progress has been made towards a durable ceasefire between the parties concerned, the required resumption of peaceful negotiations on final status or the sustained opening of border crossings. Israel has yet to cease its unilateral and provocative construction and expansion of settlements and the separation wall, its demolition of Palestinian homes and eviction of their families, and its revocation of residency permits, thus directly endangering and altering the demographic composition, character, nature and status of the occupied Palestinian territory. The humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip remains shocking and is a causal effect of the restrictions and blockade imposed on the local population. The recent resurgence of sporadic rocket attacks against civilians in southern Israel again stirs up deep worries.

The vicious cycle of violence and counter-violence has sowed the seeds of confrontation, animosity and incitement for too long. In order to achieve a breakthrough into a new period in which an independent State of Palestine can thrive and all peoples in the region can co-exist in peace and security, all parties concerned should uphold their mutual obligations under the Road Map, the Madrid terms of reference, the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant Security Council resolutions. Constructive dialogue and political negotiations must be put first, whereas the military option should be excluded.

Israel must immediately freeze illegal settlement activity, dismantle outposts erected since March 2001, open all border crossings, release all Palestinian prisoners and facilitate humanitarian assistance and reconstruction efforts in Gaza. That State must do so with the utmost urgency and responsibility.

Palestinian factions must make sincere efforts to resolve their differences within the framework of intra-Palestinian reconciliation and jointly work towards the establishment of a Government of national unity. In the interest of long-term regional peace and justice, we reiterate our calls for all the parties concerned to strictly comply with international humanitarian and human rights law and conduct, without delay, credible domestic investigations into the many reported allegations of violations, as recommended by the Goldstone report (A/HRC/12/48).

In this overall situation, my delegation again acknowledges the intensified efforts of the Quartet, the League of Arab States, regional countries and the international community at large in helping to achieve a two-State solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict and to revitalize the Middle East peace process on all tracks.

We recognize the Palestinian National Authority's determination, under difficult circumstances, to embark on practical policies and measures to strengthen socioeconomic foundations, security sector reform and functional institutions for a future State. We join the repeated calls from the wider membership of the United Nations and from many different parts of the world for peace, reconciliation and mediation in the Middle East.

Turning to Lebanon, we welcome and support the efforts undertaken by the Lebanese Government to strengthen the national course of peace consolidation, socio-economic reconstruction and the normalization of external relations, and encourage the parties in Lebanon to jointly contribute to these endeavours. We demand that Israel immediately and unconditionally cease all violations of Lebanese independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, including by ceasing flights over Lebanese territory and withdrawing from the northern part of Al-Ghajar village and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line. We reiterate our support for the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006).

Finally, as it always has, Viet Nam continues to commit itself to joining the international community's collective efforts towards the peaceful settlement of the Israel-Palestine and Arab-Israeli conflicts and the

ultimate attainment of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to Mr. Paul Badji, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr. Badji (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I congratulate you, Mr. President, on the exemplary and effective manner in which you are steering the work of the Council during this first month of the year. I also thank Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his comprehensive and objective briefing on the situation in the Middle East, and on Palestine in particular.

Last week, at the first meeting of the Committee in 2010, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon drew the Committee's attention to the current state of peace negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. In particular, he emphasized that "if we do not move forward on the political process soon, we risk sliding backwards". The Committee fully shares that concern. We very much fear that the prospects for a resumption of negotiations are slipping away. Israel is determined to establish a state of affairs on the ground that appears to be irreversible, even on the very land where Palestinians are to establish their future State.

Today, it would seem that the Israeli Government's announcement on 25 November concerning what Prime Minister Netanyahu referred to as a policy of restraint for a period of 10 months was not made in good faith. Construction has continued apace in spite of that announcement. In addition, the Israeli Government continues to give financial support to established settlements. That temporary moratorium on the establishment of settlements moratorium explicitly excluded East Jerusalem, where settlement infrastructure is being expanded and consolidated while Palestinian residents are dispossessed, discriminated against and evicted.

I take this opportunity to remind Israel that the international community as a whole does not recognize its annexation of East Jerusalem. Resolution 252 (1968), which the Security Council adopted 42 years ago, clearly states that

> "all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, including expropriation of land and properties thereon, which tend to change the legal status of Jerusalem are invalid and cannot change that status". (*resolution 252 (1968), para. 2*)

The Committee welcomes the fact that major international stakeholders have recently reaffirmed that position of principle of the Council.

Unfortunately, one year after the end of Israel's Operation Cast Lead — whose violence and brutality are still fresh in our minds — Palestinians in Gaza continue to suffer the disastrous consequences of a war that was imposed on them by Israel. The nearly airtight blockade of the Gaza Strip continues. Israel allows the occasional entry of certain essential goods to pass crossings that it established and controls. The funds generously pledged by the international community at Sharm el-Sheikh for the reconstruction of Gaza have not yet reached the Palestinians for whom they were intended. The initiative of the Secretary-General to put United Nations agencies on the ground in charge of the most pressing reconstruction projects continues to be ignored by the occupying Power.

Various United Nations bodies, with the General Assembly in the lead, have raised the issue of responsibility for certain acts committed during the war in Gaza. First and foremost, the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (A/HRC/12/48), which was established by the Human Rights Council and led by Justice Richard Goldstone, presented a comprehensive and balanced account of the events in Gaza. The Mission submitted ample and unbiased evidence that both Israel, the occupying Power, and Palestinian armed groups had committed serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law during the fighting, including some that should be prosecuted as war crimes.

The Committee supported the Mission's main recommendation that Israel and the Palestinians conduct impartial and credible investigations and prosecute those found responsible, as called for by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/10. We look forward to receiving the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of that resolution. The Committee calls on the Security Council to remain seized of this matter.

The Committee also encourages principled action by the international community aimed at ensuring

respect for the norms of international humanitarian law. In particular, the Committee calls on the high contracting parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to fulfil their obligations under article 1 of the Convention, which requires them to respect and ensure respect for the Convention in all circumstances. In that regard, we welcome the efforts of the Swiss Government acting as depositary of the Conventions.

The main elements for resolving the problem that lies at the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory — are contained in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008). The continuing lack of political will to implement those resolutions has devastating consequences for the Palestinians in the occupied territories, for the Israeli people and for the region as a whole. The active involvement of the Security Council in bringing about a peaceful resolution of the conflict in accordance with the norms of international law is crucial. On behalf of the Committee, I urge the members of the Council to live up to the responsibility entrusted to them by the Charter of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

Mr. Al-Allaf (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council this month. I also thank your predecessor for having wisely guided the work of the Council last month. We further thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Fernandez-Taranco, for his comprehensive and detailed briefing.

Jordan aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of the Sultanate of Oman on behalf of the Group of Arab States and of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as with the statement to be made by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The peace process in the Middle East is at a critical phase and facing serious obstacles. Nevertheless, Jordan, under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah Bin Al Hussein, remains committed to working with the various international and regional actors to ensure peace and stability in the region on the basis of the two-State solution, which enjoys the unanimous support of the international community and has been reaffirmed in the many resolutions adopted by the Security Council.

The road to peace is very clear. It requires the international community to intensify its efforts to launch serious and effective talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis. The negotiations must address the various issues related to final status, including borders, Jerusalem, refugees, security and water. They must take place as soon as possible; begin at the point where previous negotiations ended and on the basis of a monitoring and verification system with a clear calendar; and lead to the creation of an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian State on Palestinian national territory, with East Jerusalem as its capital, within the 1967 borders and living side by side in peace and security with Israel.

In that respect, Jordan reaffirms the important and ongoing leadership role being played by the United States of America and the efforts undertaken by the Quartet to ensure that the talks are relaunched in an effective manner, lead to the two-State solution, and establish a comprehensive regional peace based on the mandates and terms of reference of the international community and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Despite the upsurge in diplomatic and political activity in the region and world capitals to promote the relaunching of the talks, Israel is pursuing its unilateral policies in the occupied Palestinian territories. These policies in no way indicate any desire for peace on its part, are manifestly ineffective and have proven to be a failure in settling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. If Israel wants to convey a genuine desire for peace, it must immediately end practices that contradict its stated positions. These are the actions of an occupying Power and thereby contradict international law. International law, international humanitarian law and human rights law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War, must all be respected.

The Assistant Secretary-General's briefing stressed Israel's ongoing settlement activity and expansion in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly East Jerusalem. Such activity reflects the will to create a new reality on the ground, in clear contravention of international humanitarian law and of Israel's commitments under the Road Map. The Israeli settlements are a burden on and obstacle to the movement of Palestinians and economic development

and growth in the Palestinian territories. They give rise to increased tension and exacerbate a situation in which trust is already sorely lacking. They also represent a major obstacle to international and regional efforts to relaunch the negotiations, and even jeopardize the possibility of a peaceful solution and the future of a contiguous, independent and viable Palestinian State. We therefore demand that Israel put a complete and immediate halt to all its settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, in particular East Jerusalem and including so-called natural growth.

Today's meeting is an opportunity to draw the international community's attention to one of the most serious issues facing the region: illegal Israeli practices in East Jerusalem. These practices have endured throughout the decades of occupation, during which Israel has refused to live up to its legal commitments. As the occupying Power, Israel has refused to respond to the repeated appeals of the international community and imposed its own rules and settlement policies. It has clearly violated the relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular the resolutions of the Security Council, often creating a vicious and sanguinary circle.

Israel has continued its illegal practices in East Jerusalem, including its archaeological excavations at Muslim and Christian holy sites, particularly in and around Al-Haram Al-Sharif. It has also continued under various pretexts to destroy houses, expel Arab inhabitants, close Palestinian institutions and deprive Palestinians of their right to remain in the holy city by confiscating their identity cards. These measures are all part and parcel of a broader policy to enhance Israeli control over the city, create a new reality on the ground, and alter the demographic profile of occupied East Jerusalem.

The influential international actors must stop these Israeli practices. It is of great importance that the international and regional protagonists understand the negative impact of these Israeli activities on the Islamic world. Israel must cease forthwith its violations of the status of East Jerusalem, in particular by abandoning its practice of increasing the Jewish population there and of seeking to weaken the city's Islamic character. Such activities, which violate international law — especially the Fourth Geneva Convention — threaten the future of the holy city and jeopardize the possibility of a peaceful settlement, must end.

For the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and His Majesty King Abdullah Bin Al Hussein, the status of the city is a red line that must not be crossed. The protection of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem itself, are top priorities for Jordan. We will take every step necessary to protect Islamic and Christian holy sites there. The restoration and maintenance of those sites and the protection of the city's Arab identity are crucial, and any attempt to make it a Jewish city will be opposed. Jerusalem must remain a symbol of peace and peaceful cohabitation. It plays a role of singular importance in the lives of millions of Muslims and Christians throughout the world. The repeated provocations and illegal acts could lead to a situation that would threaten the foundations of international peace and security, the maintenance of which is of course the main task of the Security Council.

It has been a year since the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip. The repercussions of that aggression continue to be tangible for our brothers in the Gaza Strip, where they live in despair, poverty, hunger and privation in many forms. The situation in the Gaza Strip has now reached the level of a humanitarian catastrophe. Our brothers there are suffering on a daily basis, lacking even the basic means for survival. Any progress in the peace efforts requires a radical change in the tragic situation of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, particularly in the Gaza Strip. The international community must take immediate and effective steps to guarantee that Israel implement resolution 1860 (2009), that it lift the blockade of the Gaza Strip, authorize the launching of reconstruction and economic recovery projects, allow the entry of medical supplies, food, agricultural products, fuel and construction materials, permit the sick to reach hospitals and allow civilians their freedom of movement.

Jordan and His Majesty the King continue their numerous efforts to engage with the international community and urge it to put an end to the dreadful suffering of the Palestinian people. We call upon the international community to provide the assistance required to improve living conditions there and ensure that they do not deteriorate even further. We appeal to the international community to shoulder its humanitarian and legal responsibility to guarantee the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Palestinian territories, and to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to put an end to their suffering.

The Security Council plays an essential role in providing assistance and political support to regional and international efforts to relaunch negotiations leading to a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, which is at the heart of the situation in the Middle East. A resolution of the Palestinian question is the key to all the conflicts in the region. If the efforts towards peace fail, there will be catastrophic consequences for the region and its peoples. Any failure in establishing peace and putting an end to this conflict will exacerbate extremism and pose a threat to the peace and security of the Palestinians and Israelis and indeed of all peoples in the region, as well as to broader international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Tarar (Pakistan): The Pakistan delegation would like, Sir, to congratulate you on the successful Chinese presidency of the Security Council for this month and on your having convened this important meeting. We would also like to congratulate the new non-permanent members of the Security Council: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Gabon, Lebanon and Nigeria. We wish them success.

The Middle East is the sacred birthplace of great religions of our world. It resonates with the kinder nature of the relationship of eternal God with mortal beings. It is wrapped in overarching spirituality and religious good. Its symbols are blessed decorations in millions of homes around the globe. Its divinity demands that it be a land of peace and love, in contrast to the reality of its being the abode of unending conflicts and the epitome of human political failure. That failure has given birth to difficult religious, philosophical and political questions. It has called into question the notion of limitless human ingenuity. The very concept of intrinsic human good has been torn apart by the brutalities committed in this land. In the turmoil of the Middle East we mortal beings have been exposed at our worst, in all our callousness, cruelty and brutality.

The consequences of our collective failure in the Middle East are disastrous for the region and beyond. Adding to pessimism about our humanity is the continuing gravity of the situation on the ground in terms of the humanitarian plight of the Palestinian people. Amidst this human tragedy, the ongoing provocative and aggressive actions of Israel in East Jerusalem have compounded the plight of the Palestinian people and made a political settlement all the more difficult.

There is recognition of the fact that a just settlement of the Palestinian question is central to ending the cycle of suspicion and discord that has undermined peace and security in the Middle East and has also strained the relations between neighbours in the region. The question is how to convert this growing international consensus into credible action that would bring to fruition this arduous search for peace. An immediate end to the illegal practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people is the most important prerequisite for building an environment of trust and confidence. Trust and confidence, together with active engagement of the international community, represent the only way forward for the peace process and progress towards a two-State solution in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

There is no option but to return to the negotiating table. Efforts to create new facts on the ground that prejudice the outcome of negotiations are neither recognized by nor acceptable to the international community. We should also learn from the half-hearted attempts, unfulfilled promises and aborted peace processes of the past. Greater political will is required to bring the parties together and help them engage in a sustained negotiation process, in good faith and without preconditions, aimed at achieving within a reasonable time frame a comprehensive agreement.

In accordance with its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council has a significant and crucial role in supporting the efforts for renewed negotiations and their successful conclusion. I wish to conclude by reiterating Pakistan's full support for this objective and our strong commitment to the realization of an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. Argüello (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Sir, I would like to thank you for this opportunity for non-members of the Security Council to express their viewpoints on the situation in the Middle East and the Palestinian question. I would also

like to congratulate you on your work as President of the Council for the month of January. Allow me as well to thank in particular the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, for his thorough briefing this morning. We would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their statements.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been in the agenda of the Security Council for more than 60 years. Taking into account the time that has passed and the situation of instability that it provokes, it is of high priority to achieve a lasting peace in that region, which would lead to the establishment of a viable, democratic and contiguous Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel, in peace and security, in conformity with Security Council resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Argentina recognizes the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to build a viable and independent State. In this regard, we insist that Israel must cease its military operations in the occupied territories, as well as all practices that contravene international law, ending its policy of illegal settlements and the construction of the wall. We also recognize the right of the State of Israel to live in peace with its neighbours, within safe and internationally recognized borders, and, at the same time, we condemn terrorist actions of Palestinian armed groups against the Israeli civilian population.

Argentina believes that restarting the peace process will require the support of the international community, as well as the active mediation of the United States, with a view to putting an end to illegal settlements, finding a solution to the Jerusalem issue and promoting international support for addressing the question of possible compensation for Palestinian refugees. In this context, Argentina values the efforts of the United States Middle East Envoy, George Mitchell, to restart the peace talks with a view to making effective progress towards the establishment of two States as a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We also believe that the Arab League's land for peace proposal contains a core of initiatives that could help the peace process move forward, and we hope Israel will take them into consideration.

We also express our disappointment at the difficulties that appear as we try to move ahead with the peace process and resolve all the final status issues, including Jerusalem. In this regard, Argentina is concerned about high-level Israeli authorities' expressed refusal to freeze the building of settlements and proclamation of Israel's presence in the Jordan Valley. On another issue, my country has repeatedly expressed its concern with the deepening humanitarian crisis affecting the Palestinian people and by the failure to implement resolution 1860 (2009); because of this, we participated actively in the donor conferences in Paris in December 2007 and Sharm el-Sheikh in March.

After the Israeli attack on Gaza between 27 December 2008 and 18 January 2009, the Human Rights Council decided to set up a Fact-Finding Mission for Gaza, which produced the Goldstone report (A/HRC/12/48). At its sixty-fourth session, the General Assembly, with the positive votes of 114 members, among them Argentina, adopted its resolution 64/10, endorsing the report of the Human Rights Council, which approved the Goldstone report and called on the parties to carry out credible investigations into the events that led to the convening of the twelfth special session of the Council and the subsequent report.

Argentina's vote in this regard must be considered in the context of our own recent history, which prompts Argentina, in every appropriate forum, to support objective and complete investigations when violations of international law and international humanitarian law are in question. In accordance with our principles and convictions, we could not refuse to support the request that the United Nations investigate accusations of war crimes on both sides during Operation Cast Lead.

We hope that this open debate of the Security Council will provide a new impetus for restarting the Middle East peace process, which requires the strong and determined support and commitment of the international community.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that Argentina's commitment to human rights and the fight against impunity has led it to become a member of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research. On this International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, we would like in this forum to pay tribute to the victims, as we do every year in our country.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you warmly on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would also like to extend the warm congratulations of the OIC to the new members of the Security Council: Lebanon, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Gabon and Nigeria. I would also like to express the OIC's appreciation to the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, for the decent, sober and genuine briefing he gave this morning.

The OIC expresses its serious concerns about the grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, in particular the continuing inhumane Israeli blockade and dire humanitarian crisis being imposed on the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip, and the ongoing illegal and still unpunished colonization campaign being carried out by Israel, the occupying Power, in the West Bank, particularly in and around Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

The international community has repeatedly witnessed and condemned Israel's illegal measures in the occupied Palestinian territory, at the forefront of which is Israel's untrammelled, deliberate campaign to change the Palestinian Arab identity and character of the holy city of Al-Quds. These activities, deemed null and void by the international community, include, but are not limited to: the ongoing settlement activities; the persistent aggression against Islamic and Christian holy places in Al-Quds Al-Sharif; the continued construction of the separation wall; the revocation of Palestinian residency rights in the city; the eviction of Palestinian families from the city; the demolition of Palestinian houses; the imposition of severe restrictions on movement, which has already isolated the city from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory; and continued dangerous and provocative digging and excavation work in and around the Al-Aqsa mosque and its vicinity.

The OIC strongly condemns these Israeli violations and calls for the immediate cessation of all such illegal Israeli activities in accordance with the occupying Power's obligations under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the many relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, of which, as members know, there are hundreds, including 37 Security Council resolutions. In this regard, the OIC recalls, inter alia, Security Council resolutions 446 (1979), 465 (1980) and 478 (1980), which all remain valid and must be implemented.

The OIC recalls paragraph 4 of resolution 2/36-PAL, adopted at the thirty-sixth ministerial meeting of the OIC in Damascus, in which the members reaffirmed that all the Israeli colonial settlement measures and practices in Al-Quds and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory are null and void, in line with the resolutions of international legitimacy, as well as international covenants and conventions that consider all Israeli legislative, administrative and colonial settlement procedures and measures aimed at altering the legal, demographic, architectural, cultural and heritage-related status of the holy city to be illegitimate. The resolution urgently requests the Security Council to revive the International Supervision and Monitoring Committee to prevent and prohibit colonial settlement in Al-Quds and the occupied Arab territories.

We also strongly condemn the attacks by the Israeli occupying forces, including extremist aggressive settlers under the supervision of the occupying Power, perpetrated against Palestinian civilians and worshippers at Al-Aqsa mosque and the Al-Haram Al-Sharif compound in Al-Quds Al-Sharif. The OIC emphasizes that the question of the holy Haram in Al-Quds is a red line that cannot be addressed with laxity or the subject of any debate, and that any provocative or illegal unilateral actions against the holy Al-Aqsa mosque will have very serious repercussions for the Islamic world and be likely to destabilize the region.

The OIC calls upon the international community, particularly the Security Council, to shoulder its responsibilities, especially towards occupied Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and to take urgent action to bring a complete halt to all illegal Israeli measures and actions aimed at changing the demographic composition, character, geographic nature and legal status of the holy city.

One year ago, the international community witnessed with horror the Israeli military aggression against the Gaza Strip that killed and injured thousands of besieged unarmed Palestinian civilians, including children, and caused vast destruction to property, infrastructure and agricultural land. The OIC welcomes the adoption of resolution 64/10 of 5 November 2009 by the General Assembly on the follow-up to the report

of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict. The group is of the view that that resolution constitutes an important first step in pursuing accountability for those Israeli violations, which were authenticated and confirmed by evidence in the Goldstone report (A/HRC/12/48). Thus, further action should be taken by the relevant United Nations organs and bodies, including the Security Council, in order to bring the Israeli perpetrators of those crimes to justice and to put an end to Israel's impunity and above-the-law attitude.

The OIC condemns Israel's inhumane and unlawful blockade of the Gaza Strip and expresses serious concern about the grave deterioration of the socio-economic conditions and the deepening of the humanitarian crisis of the Palestinian civilians due to the blockade. The OIC calls on Israel, the occupying Power, to end its collective punitive measures imposed on the civilian population in Gaza. It calls for the immediate lifting of Israel's unjust blockade and the opening of all crossing points with Gaza, in accordance with international law and all United Nations resolutions, in order to ensure the free access of humanitarian aid and other essential supplies and goods, including commercial supplies and necessary reconstruction materials, and to facilitate the crossing of persons to and from Gaza.

The OIC remains deeply concerned by Israel's ongoing air and land violations of Lebanon's sovereignty, in breach of resolution 1701 (2006), and calls on Israel to withdraw fully from the remaining Lebanese occupied land in the Shab'a farms, the Kfar Shuba hills and the northern part of Al-Ghajar village.

The OIC also reaffirms that all measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan and its institutional structure, as well as Israeli measures to impose jurisdiction and administration there, are null and void and have no legal effect. The OIC demands that Israel abide fully and immediately by Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the lines of 4 June 1967, also in implementation of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The OIC calls for an intensification of efforts by the international community, including this Security Council in line with its Charter responsibilities, aimed at accelerating the process of achieving a just and comprehensive peace settlement in the Middle East on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map.

In that regard, the OIC reiterates its firm and unwavering support for the establishment of the State of Palestine based on commitment to the right of sovereignty over the Palestinian territory occupied in 1967, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, and for a just solution to the plight of the Palestine refugees on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

Mr. Al-Shafi (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your successful presidency of the Security Council for this month. I thank you for convening this meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, in the form of an open debate, which affords us the opportunity to participate. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco for his briefing. Allow me to associate my delegation with the statements made by the representatives of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, of Syria on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and of Oman on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

We meet today a year after the Israeli military assault on the Gaza Strip, the so-called Operation Cast Lead, and the adoption of resolution 1860 (2009). The fact that one year has passed since that criminal operation does not mean that it has been forgotten. The crimes that have been and continue to be committed in Gaza and throughout the occupied Palestinian territories are violations of international law. They are subject to no statute of limitations and should not be forgotten, even with the passage of time. How can such violations be forgotten when they continue to be committed in various forms, in particular the unjust siege imposed on an entire people?

Israel's military forces have caused massive destruction and damage to various infrastructures in the Gaza Strip, whose population of over 1.5 million was already suffering from shortages of food and health supplies. The siege imposed on the Strip continues to

hinder the access of humanitarian supplies and basic building materials to the Strip.

The State of Qatar was one of the first countries to take the initiative to help our Palestinian brothers in the Gaza Strip to overcome that humanitarian disaster. However, financial support is useless unless it can reach its beneficiaries.

Although the Human Rights Council has acted in response to the events that occurred in the Gaza Strip last year and is still considering the issue, it is more incumbent on this Council to act, because the question of Palestinian lies at the heart of its mandate and is one of its main agenda items. The report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (A/HRC/12/48), mandated by the Human Rights Council to investigate war events in Gaza, has clearly shown the gravity of the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed in Gaza. Our humanitarian conscience requires us to ensure that the perpetrators of such crimes do not go unpunished. For its part, the Security Council has taken no concrete action on the recommendations in the report of the Board of Inquiry established to investigate the targeting of United Nations premises and facilities during that act of aggression (see S/2009/250).

It seems clear to all that the continued military occupation is the root of the problem and that that occupation will not provide security for Israel. It causes the worst violations of human rights perpetrated against an unarmed and oppressed people under the pretext of combating violence and terrorism, when in fact it is one of the root causes of terrorism. The claim that excessive military force can serve to protect the security of Israel is false, because the right to struggle for liberation from foreign occupation is a legitimate right that cannot be equated with military aggression by occupation forces.

We stress our firm rejection of Israel's illegal measures in occupied East Jerusalem and its attempts to change the city's Arab identity, demographic composition, legal status and religious character. We stress that all such attempts remain null, void and without any legal effect. The international community must reject the attempts by the Israeli Government to desecrate Islamic and Christian Holy Sites, demolish houses in the city, expel its Arab residents and confiscate their identity cards in order to Judaize the city. Those attempts violate Israel's obligations, as the occupying Power, under international law, are contrary to relevant United Nations resolutions and undermine the foundations of a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Furthermore, such measures disrupt international efforts for an alliance of civilizations.

Israeli authorities continue to commit numerous human rights violations against Arab populations within the so-called Green Line and to defy the international consensus on the need to cease building and expanding the illegal settlements in an effort to annex more Palestinian land, de facto. Those actions undermine international mediation efforts, in particular those of the Quartet.

The State of Qatar believes that resolution of the Palestinian issue can come only through the establishment of two States living side by side in peace and security. We believe that the Israeli Government's attempts to expand settlements, particularly in and around East Jerusalem, undermine efforts for a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders because they threaten the contiguity of the Palestinian territory, which is an essential component of a viable Palestinian State.

The Israeli Government seeks to justify the expansion of settlements with what it calls natural growth. However, let me emphasize Qatar's rejection of such a concept altogether, because such settlement activity is fundamentally illegal and that growth is not natural, since Israeli public policy encourages the colonization of the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly East Jerusalem, by offering Government subsidies and incentives to encourage the transfer of its civilian population to the Palestinian territory, in contravention of international law.

We must also note the continued Israeli violations of Lebanon's sovereignty, in contravention of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), and the ongoing Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory and the Syrian Golan. We reiterate that the Israeli decision to annex the Golan is null and void. The Golan must be returned to Syria, just as the remaining occupied Lebanese territories must be returned to Lebanon.

The establishment of a lasting, comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East can be based only on the principle of land for peace, the Madrid terms of reference, relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. The Arab Peace Initiative was

reaffirmed at the Doha summit in March 2009, with a reference indicating that the Arab side will continue to bring it forward conditioned on its acceptance by the Israeli side. Therefore, the new Israeli Government must refrain from taking extreme positions. It must take advantage of the goodwill on the Arab side in order to end the crisis in the Middle East.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the need to involve all of the Palestinian people in the peace process to ensure its success. The Palestinians must seriously pursue everything that will help to foster national unity in their own interest and guarantee a unified Palestinian territory, both geographically and politically. We would be remiss not to salute and express our pride in our brothers and sisters, the Palestinians, who remain steadfast in the face of occupation, injustice and oppression.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Mashabane (South Africa): My delegation welcomes the opportunity to participate once again in the Security Council debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. Allow me to extend our congratulations to you, Mr. President, for the able manner in which you have steered the Council's work during this month. We also wish to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs for his briefing today.

At the outset my delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

For over 60 years the question of Palestine has been on the agenda of the Security Council. During that period a number of important resolutions have been passed and many peace processes initiated. However, as reported here today and as evidenced by the recent Israeli air strikes in Gaza, peace still eludes the Middle East. My Government has noted with concern the latest round of Israeli air strikes in the Gaza Strip and has registered its condemnation in the strongest possible terms. Those obstructionist actions on the part of Israel are hostile to the concerted efforts to achieve a negotiated solution to the conflict in the Middle East. We therefore maintain that there can be no military solution to the conflict.

Those actions are yet again proof of Israel's disregard for international law, and they fuel the growing international frustration. They also come in the wake of the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (A/HRC/12/48) and the subsequent resolutions adopted by the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly that indicate that impunity for violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law cannot and will not be tolerated. We therefore reiterate our call on all parties concerned to implement the recommendations of the Fact-Finding Mission.

These hostile activities and disproportionate use of force pose a serious obstacle to achieving a peaceful and negotiated settlement of the Palestinian question. South Africa maintains that the creation of a viable and independent Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, existing alongside the State of Israel within secure and internationally recognized borders, as well as the complete withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab territories, including the West Bank and East Jerusalem, are the only means of finding a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict. This is in line with international agreements, including a number of Security Council resolutions, the terms of reference of the Madrid conference, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

To realize this objective, the Governments and peoples of Israel and Palestine have to refrain from activities that could jeopardize or derail the peace process. We are concerned about the continuing impasse in negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli leadership, and therefore call on the parties to create conditions conducive to the resumption of negotiations.

The ongoing military occupation of the Palestinian territory and Arab territories and the denial of self-determination to the Palestinian people are the primary sources of insecurity and instability in the Middle East. South Africa reaffirms its support for Palestine's right to self-determination and independence and will continue to pledge our support for the implementation of international initiatives, including the Arab Peace Initiative, the relevant Security Council resolutions and the principle of land for peace.

Is it not about time that this body, the Council, in accordance with its mandate, consider concrete and practical steps towards the resolution of the Middle East situation, in particular the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Debates have been conducted, statements

made and resolutions adopted on the situation in the Middle East, but no meaningful progress has been made thus far.

South Africa condemns the continued illegal Israeli settlement activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the facts being created on the ground, which could prejudice the final status negotiations and present an obstacle to the peace process. It is therefore the view of South Africa that the continuing illegal Israeli settlement activities in Gaza and East Jerusalem do not help the situation insofar as the negotiations on the final status are concerned.

To this end, the continued blockade imposed on Gaza has dire humanitarian consequences for ordinary Palestinians, their economic livelihood and the reconstruction of Gaza. We call on Israel to immediately lift this blockade and open the border crossings to alleviate the humanitarian crisis.

With regard to the separation wall, we have always been of the view that its existence does not constitute a legitimate security measure, and we wish to express our disappointment that the Government of Israel has yet to comply with the findings of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the construction of a wall in the occupied Palestinian territory. Equally, the ongoing home demolition programme constitutes a serious violation of international law.

In conclusion, the international community, and the Security Council in particular, have an obligation to protect the weak, promote peace and seek a lasting solution to this long-standing conflict. The absence of long-lasting peace therefore demands that we redouble our efforts to achieve this goal.

Likewise, the Palestinian and Israeli people and Governments have the responsibility and duty to create a climate conducive to resuming negotiations without delay. It remains our view that the crisis in the Middle East region cannot be resolved outside of the resolution of the Palestinian question. Therefore, it is critical that all efforts be geared towards a lasting solution to the unwavering struggle of the Palestinian people for self-determination, peace, human rights and prosperity.

For its part, South Africa will continue to support all efforts of the concerned parties and the international community. South Africa can only hope that, as we begin the second decade of the twenty-first century, the international community, including the Security Council, will do its best to assist the people of Palestine to achieve their long-held aspiration to self-determination, independence and freedom.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Ali (Malaysia): Mr. President, let me, at the outset, congratulate you on your leadership of this Council and express how pleased we are to see you presiding over this meeting today.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Egypt and Syria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, respectively.

Since the most recent debate on this item, held in October 2009 (see S/PV.6201), and despite the so-called 10-month moratorium, Israeli authorities continue to announce plans to build hundreds upon hundreds of settlement units in the West Bank, particularly in East Jerusalem. The construction of the separation wall in and around occupied East Jerusalem has continued unabated despite the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 9 July 2004. Concomitantly, illegal land confiscations and countless other unlawful measures continue, including home demolitions and the eviction of Palestinian families.

Furthermore, the ongoing revocation of the residency rights of Palestinian inhabitants of East Jerusalem has further worsened the situation. In 2008 alone, Israel revoked the residency rights of nearly 5,000 Palestinians, forbidding them from living in the very city of their birth. This figure represents the highest number of residency revocations in a one-year period since the occupation began in 1967. Tens of thousands more Palestinian Jerusalemites are under the threat of having their residency rights revoked.

All these illegal policies and the affirmation by the Israeli Prime Minister that Israel will retain parts of the occupied West Bank will definitely change the demographic composition, character and status of the occupied Palestinian territory and seriously undermine the two-State solution. Such actions are in grave violation of international law, the Fourth Geneva Convention and relevant United Nations resolutions. In this regard, Israel must be held accountable.

With regard to Gaza, the humanitarian situation there remains dire. The blockade effectively imprisons

the people of Gaza, deprives them of essential needs, including the construction materials that are necessary to rebuild their homes and other vital infrastructure destroyed during the Israeli military aggression of more than a year ago. This illegal blockade, which is a form of collective punishment forbidden by international law, must be brought to an end. In this regard, we again urge the Security Council to take action to end the siege, in accordance with resolution 1860 (2009).

Resolving these issues requires us to focus our energies and efforts on restoring to the Palestinians their inalienable rights, including their right to an independent State of their very own. This in turn requires all parties to act sincerely to achieve the objective of a just and lasting solution and action to be taken by the Security Council to restore peace and stability in the Middle East. Needless to say, this requires the political will of this Council to implement its very own resolutions on this issue.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Algahrah (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we would like to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs for his important briefing this morning and for the information he provided. The briefing highlighted the gravity of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories at all levels and the suffering of the Palestinian people, which has become clear to this Council and every member of the international community.

We would also like to associate ourselves with the statements made by the representatives of the Sultanate of Oman on behalf of the League of Arab States, of Syria on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

A full year has elapsed since the start of the war launched by the Israeli occupation forces on Gaza and the adoption of resolution 1860 (2009). Despite all the assistance extended to reconstruct Gaza, which has been blocked by the occupation forces, the widespread and brutal destruction is still visible to all. Israel continues its policy of collective punishment against the population of the Gaza Strip. It continues to block the reconstruction of Gaza in the wake of the destruction caused by the war unleashed by Israel. It continues to close crossing points, erect new checkpoints and build the separation wall. All those practices by the Israeli occupiers clearly reflect continued Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people.

Decades of Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory have created a tragic situation for the Palestinian people, in which, for many, life and death have amounted to the same thing and in which hope for a better future has dissipated. Those decades of occupation have engendered a climate of frustration and injustice and an environment marked by the worst human suffering imaginable and by a lack of dignity and the rule of law. In that environment, killing, depopulation and the plundering of wealth have become the norm.

Ever since when Israel announced its annexation of Jerusalem in 1967, a bitter sequence of events began to change the demographics and the character of the Holy City, with the Judaization of the city and its depopulation of Arab residents. In 2008, Israel confiscated the identity cards of 5,000 Palestinians, on the pretext that they reside beyond the municipal limits of Jerusalem. It intends to do the same to between 50,000 and 100,000 Palestinians in the near future. This Judaization, depopulation and confiscation of residency permits can only be described as ethnic cleansing.

Israel has long operated beyond the framework of international law, the principles of the United Nations and international humanitarian law, including by enshrining the concept of "natural growth" — which amounts to natural extermination. The situation in East Jerusalem is deteriorating day by day. The demolition of houses, depopulation and the confiscation of identity cards are intended to change the natural features, demographic character and legal status of the city.

Whenever we consider the Palestinian question, we condemn the continued settlement activities and call for an immediate end to them, including so-called natural growth, and for the removal of all settlement outposts established since 2001. Today we reaffirm that the establishment and construction of settlements is illegal under international law. This represents an obstacle to peace — indeed, to the first step towards peace, which is negotiations. There can be no negotiations while settlements are being built at a feverish pace, thereby imposing a new reality that will make any future resolution of the Palestinian question impossible. If we understand the facts about the

settlements and why they are being built, and if we understand the policy of Israel, then a condition for a return to negotiations is a complete halt to settlement activity, especially in East Jerusalem. If Israel continues to claim that it wishes to resume negotiations and that it is committed to peace, its first gesture should be an immediate halt to all settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territories, along with the dismantlement of existing settlements.

In an earlier statement, the Secretary-General declared the settlements to be illegal and called upon Israel to fulfil its Road Map obligation to freeze all settlement activity, including so-called natural growth, and to eliminate all outposts established since March 2001. The Quartet has called upon Israel to halt the settlements and has requested the countries sponsoring the peace process to work to put a stop to the settlements. Also, we have called upon all countries of the world to help put a stop to them.

Has the Security Council translated these appeals into actions? Will the Council not heed the concerns and positions stated by so many countries by compelling Israel to stop settlement activity and remove existing settlements? Saudi Arabia is concerned by the complete inaction by the Security Council in the face of Israel's policy of State terrorism. This reflects duplicity and double standards — at the expense of the rule of law and respect for international legality in relations among countries. The Security Council faces a deadlock, as its resolutions cannot be implemented. This is another outcome of double standards in relations among countries and of the use of the veto to paralyse the Council and render it unable to serve the interests of those countries affected by this situation.

If the Council breaks this deadlock, then all States Members of the United Nations will respect its resolutions. That would restore the Council's credibility and its role in the maintenance of international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Ms. Medina-Carrasco (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish, Mr. President, to express our satisfaction at the way in which you, the representative of the People's Republic of China, are guiding the work of the Security Council during the month of January. We thank you for having organized this meeting to consider the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

The Permanent Mission of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations fully supports the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We consider that the report by the Secretariat on the critical situation in the Middle East, in particular in Palestine, is most timely. This situation is a result of the systematic refusal by the Israeli governing class to respect international law or the Palestinian people's right to peace and territorial integrity, or to respect the rights of Syria and Lebanon. The Government of Israel does not seem to realize that by practicing its malicious policies it is ignoring its own history and showing distrespect for it.

We believe in peace built by peoples. Peace is not imposed by force, by threats or by war. In our capital, two major houses of worship are separated by a few metres: a mosque and a synagogue. There, the faithful gather to practice their religion. That scene is duplicated in many countries around the world. But it does not seem to be the case in the Middle East. We have to ask ourselves why.

We wish to stress before the Security Council that Governments of goodwill are demanding the achievement of a lasting peace in the region. Within its mandate under the Charter, the Security Council must demand that Israel, the occupying Power, comply with General Assembly resolutions on the Middle East and withdraw from all the occupied territories. It is crucial that Israel put a permanent end to the policy of extermination against the Palestinian people that it has been carrying out. It must also put an end once and for all to settlements, blockades, the detention of Palestinians, the demolition of homes and evictions. This policy of genocide has been heightened in East Jerusalem, including through the revocation of identity cards for Palestinian residents, who have been forcibly removed.

As the Council knows very well, it is a crime under international law to force the relocation of thousands of Palestinians from their own city. In that context, it is scandalous, to say the least, that some are trying to ignore the legitimate right of Palestinians to defend themselves in the face of brutal aggression by

Israel — a regime that even possesses weapons of mass destruction.

It is important to reiterate that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela does not recognize Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem or its effort to have Jerusalem considered as a unified whole by declaring it eternal and indivisible.

Also of great concern are the letters from the Permanent Representatives of Lebanon and Syria to the Secretary-General in December 2009 and January of this year (S/2009/686 and S/2010/4 respectively) informing him of the ongoing violations committed by Israel on their respective territories. Syria has even condemned an Israeli plan to occupy additional Syrian territory in the Arab Golan and to Judaize its population.

It is right to ask why, in other conflict situations and even in those outside its purview, this body acts with such speed, and even disproportionately. Why is there this complicit silence, this inaction when Israel's failure to observe all norms of international law and the Charter of the United Nations is so obvious? We should ask the Council what importance it attaches to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the wall, or to the conclusions and recommendations of the Human Rights Council's Fact-Finding Mission on Israel's terrible and aggressive policies of extermination against an innocent people, or even to the Security Council's own report on Israel's responsibility in that horrendous situation.

Some of the victors of the Second World War sacrificed the Palestinian people without a second thought. Without consulting them, they decided that the Palestinians had to share their land with people of various nationalities who had only their religion in common. The United Nations owes an historic debt to the Palestinian people. As a Member State of the United Nations, we demand that the Security Council consider the implementation of Chapter II of the Charter of the United Nations.

Given the record — which has been thoroughly considered over the decades in meetings of this Council as well as of the General Assembly — of grave violations of international law in general, to the detriment of the Palestinian people and of the countries of the region, like Syria and Lebanon, we should ask whether, if the State of Israel is *motu propio* capable of complying with the obligations of the Charter of the United Nations, it is prepared to do so. We should also ask whether the Security Council has taken the necessary preventive or coercive steps to limit the privileges of the State of Israel as provided for under Article 5.

We ask the Security Council to look into the implementation of Chapter II of the Charter and to recommend to the General Assembly some of the actions provided for under it. This body's silence in the face of the Israeli Government's daily massacre of innocent Palestinians has cast doubt on its role as guarantor of international peace and security. We urge the Security Council to regain its legitimacy in dealing with the issue before us today, to carry out its functions and to adopt the decisions that, under the Charter of the United Nations, are necessary to definitively restore peace to the Middle East.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Al-Barout (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the United Arab Emirates, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on the outstanding manner in which you have presided over the Security Council this month. I would also like to congratulate the five new non-permanent members of the Council. I wish them every success in their term of office.

The Secretariat's regular monthly briefings of the Council on developments in Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, have given us a full picture of the serious humanitarian and other violations of the rights of the Palestinian and other Arab populations of those territories by Israel, the occupying Power.

The Israeli Government has continued its policy of aggression and its blockade of the Gaza Strip, depriving Palestinians of their basic rights and of food, fuel, medicine and construction materials to rebuild after the destruction caused by the Israeli military machine in Gaza last year.

Israel has also continued to take a number of unilateral and illegal steps, including expanding the already illegal settlements in the West Bank and, in particular, East Jerusalem and its environs. The systematic policy of confiscating Palestinian territory and wealth, depopulating that land and replacing its inhabitants with Israeli settlers, along with the closure of Palestinian institutions and the provocative acts against Muslim and Christian Holy Sites in the Old

City, including attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque, have produced bitterness and great rancour in the Arab and Islamic worlds.

The United Arab Emirates would like to warn that all those Israeli policies in East Jerusalem are very dangerous. They are intended to compel as many Palestinians as possible to leave the Holy City in order to make it easier for Israel to illegally Judaize it, change its political and demographic character and impose a de facto order that rides roughshod over international resolutions and over commitments made by Israel in peace agreements with the Palestinians.

How else can we interpret the stepped-up efforts to confiscate thousands of Palestinian identity cards in order to prevent Palestinians from living in the Holy City? Reports indicate that last year alone, Israel revoked the residency rights of about 14,000 Palestinians in the Holy City and confiscated the identity cards of 5,000 of them. That is the largest number of permit cancellations in East Jerusalem in a single year since the city was occupied in 1967.

As has recently been reported, Israel has used various pretexts for doing that. Tens of thousands of Palestinians face the same fate of losing their property and the right to reside in the city. That illustrates Israel's ongoing efforts to ethnically cleanse East Jerusalem of Palestinians and to illegally impose a de facto situation on the city.

The United Arab Emirates strongly deplores all unilateral illegal measures by Israel intended to prejudice final status negotiations. They do not serve the cause of peace and peaceful coexistence. We call on the Security Council and the Quartet to assume their responsibilities and take every necessary step to put an immediate end to those Israeli acts.

We call upon the international community to condemn Israel's unilateral measures in Palestinian territory and to require it to dismantle its separation wall and settlements.

We also call on the international community to force Israel to stop confiscating land and violating the Road Map, the provisions of international law, the Fourth Geneva Convention, all relevant resolutions of international legitimacy — including those of the tenth special session of the General Assembly — and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. We demand that Israel end its siege and its policy of starving the Palestinians, and allow international assistance to reach the affected Palestinian areas, especially the Gaza Strip.

In this context, while we note the compensation paid by Israel for deliberately destroying United Nations installations in the Strip, our delegation calls on Israel to provide the necessary financial compensation to the Palestinians in the Strip for its crimes and aggression against them, in accordance with the Goldstone report (A/HRC/12/48).

We have to provide international protection for the Palestinians against repeated Israeli aggressions. We call on Israel, the occupying Power, not to commit aggression against defenceless Palestinians, in accordance with its commitments and responsibilities under the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which apply to all occupied territories under Israel's authority. We call on the international community to double its financial and economic assistance to Palestinians in order to help them deal with this extremely serious humanitarian crisis.

As for sisterly Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates deplores the daily Israeli violations of Lebanese air space. We reaffirm our position that the occupying Power must withdraw from all Lebanese territory, including the Shab'a farms, Al-Ghajar village and the Kfar Shuba hills. The United Arab Emirates stands with our brothers in Syria, and we deem all measures taken by Israel, the occupying Power, in the occupied Syrian Golan null and void and illegal. In this context, we call for the full withdrawal by Israel from the occupied Golan to the lines of 4 June 1967, in accordance with resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

In conclusion, we reaffirm that any delay by the international community in compelling Israel to end its illegal measures would send the wrong message to Israel and only encourage it to pursue them. That would push the area towards more conflict and violence, and obstruct regional and international efforts to establish a political climate conducive to peace negotiations and a comprehensive and just resolution to the Palestinian question through the two-State solution, which would allow the States to live in mutual respect, peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Nicaragua.

Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, allow me to begin by congratulating you on having assumed the presidency of the Council and to thank you for having convened this debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. We are called once again to discuss the need for a peace process that would lead us to the realization of a Palestinian State living side by side with the State of Israel, and to bring an end to Israel's illegal military occupation of Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories.

I welcome the new members of the Council: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Gabon, Lebanon and Nigeria. We know that they will always act in defence of the principles of the Charter of our Organization. I would also like to thank Mr. Fernandez-Taranco for his briefing.

This year marks the sixty-second year of the looting of the Palestinian people of their homes, their ancestral lands and of their most fundamental and inalienable human rights. It is also the forty-third year of brutal military occupation by Israel, marked by death, physical and psychological aggression, blockades, ethnic cleansing, imprisonment and humiliation. It has also been a year since the brutal Israeli invasion and occupation of Gaza, the damage to which, exacerbated by the continued blockade, has been amply documented and will have harmful effects on the Palestinian population for decades. The international community demands that those responsible for this massacre be tried before impartial tribunals.

We cannot allow Israel to continue to play with human lives and with the rights of Palestinians, Syrians, Lebanese and those in neighbouring countries. How long are we going to meet in the Security Council, calling for open debates and consultations, adopting resolutions, and discussing an issue concerning which our Organization has already decided what must be done? The United Nations must meet its historic responsibility.

Or is it perhaps possible that some Member State still has doubts about the content of General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which called for the creation of two States in Palestine, one Arab and one Jewish. Also clear and transparent are Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1701 (2006) on Lebanon and 497 (1981) on the Syrian Golan Heights. The fundamental problem does not lie in the content of these resolutions, but rather in the fact that Israel, the occupying Power, has not been required to comply with them. Those who are responsible for enforcing compliance are the permanent members of this Council, in particular one of them, the primary accomplice and ally of Israel.

The reality is that the issue of the Israeli occupation of Arab and Palestinian territories has not been resolved because Israel and its primary ally do not want to resolve it. From its beginnings, Israel has had its own clearly defined road map: the absorption of the entire Palestinian territory, the exile of that people along with the corresponding Judaization of the territory, and the expansion of its own State — all in full sight and with the consent of the members of this Council.

Illegal settlements throughout the Palestinian territory, walls that divide houses and neighbourhoods, ethnic cleansing that is being carried out, and the usurpation of East Jerusalem all point to a policy of absorption. The solution based on two States living together side by side is something that Israel has never contemplated.

As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, Nicaragua fully associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Egypt as Chairman of our Movement. We condemn Israel's illegal occupation of all of the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories, and we demand its immediate withdrawal. We condemn the Israeli policy and practice of building and/or not dismantling settlements, the inhuman blockade of Gaza and the bantustanization of the West Bank and other Palestinian territories.

It is high time for the international community to move from declarations and resolutions to action. Recognition by the entire international community of the Palestinian State would send a clear message that all the resolutions we have adopted must begin to be implemented. We do not understand why there some still who refuse to acknowledge that at this point. Thus far, only the Palestinian side has made commitments, whereby it has demonstrated its desire for peace. It is time now for the permanent members of the Council to demand that Israel make a commitment to peace and to a solution to this question in conformity with United Nations resolutions.

There is a manifest universal consensus in favour of speeding up the peace process; only Israel opposes

it. Thus, in order to get the job done, it is crucial that those who support Israel take appropriate action to ensure that Israel commits to the peace process. If Israel will not commit to an acceptable timetable, the Security Council must take appropriate measures as outlined in the Charter of the United Nations. The Palestinians, strengthening their unity with the support of the Arab nation, the Non-Aligned Movement and the rest of the international community, must prepare for their own declaration of independence, for their free and sovereign State, and for their admission as a full Member of this Organization.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia.

Mr. Jomaa (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to express to you and the entire Chinese delegation our sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We have noted the excellent manner in which you have conducted the work of the Council, ensuring the success of its deliberations on a broad range of problems, notably the tragic impact of the earthquake in Haiti and the resulting enormous destruction and loss of life. Among the dead or injured were members of the staff of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, who were carrying out their duties in defence of the principles and ideals of the Organization, and including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of mission, the late Hédi Annabi of Tunisia. May God have mercy on their souls.

I also wish to congratulate the five new non-permanent members of the Security Council. We thank the Assistant Secretary-General for his excellent briefing this morning.

Today we are discussing once more the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, in the context of the deadlock to which the peace process has regressed since the negotiations stopped, and amid all the events that have increased tensions and escalated the situation in the region, despite the efforts of many international parties to reconvene the peace negotiations.

The excesses of Israel and its practices in the occupied Palestinian territory have further complicated the situation and placed obstacles in the way of the revival of the peace process. The continued settlement activity, the demolition of houses, the evictions of Palestinians in East Jerusalem, the excavations around the Al-Aqsa mosque and other holy places in the city, and the plans to change its geographic and demographic character: all of these constitute grave violations of international instruments and resolutions of international legitimacy, in particular General Assembly resolutions on Jerusalem, as well as exacerbating tension throughout the region.

The continued blockade unjustly imposed on the Gaza Strip and the policies of closures in Palestinian areas and of restricting Palestinians' movements have contributed greatly to increased tensions in the region. This is despite repeated calls from the international community, notably from the Secretary-General in numerous reports and through his efforts to urge the Israeli authorities to lift the blockade and enable the international bodies and organizations working in this area to make progress in their reconstruction efforts and in providing for the basic needs of the civilian population in Gaza.

Tunisia has been consistently committed to the principles of justice and peace; it is eager to achieve a solution to the problem and alleviate the suffering of the brotherly people of Palestine and favours the path of peace. It therefore calls on international actors, especially the Quartet, to step up their efforts to pressure Israel to put an end to its provocative actions and seriously engage in the peace process. This means, essentially, halting settlement activities, lifting the blockade on Gaza and all the restrictions on other Palestinian territories and immediately ending all activities that can alter Jerusalem's character or deprive the Palestinian people of their rights.

In that context, Tunisia believes that the current deadlock and the return of tensions to the region, as a result of the total lack of progress in reconvening negotiations, pose a grave threat to the situation in a region that simply cannot take any more tension or escalation. We therefore call on the international community to redouble its efforts to surmount the obstacles blocking the way to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. Such a peace can be achieved only through negotiations, and that requires trust and a commitment by all parties concerned to existing agreements and to the terms of reference of the peace process.

In regard to the sister republics of Lebanon and Syria, I reiterate our call for Israel's withdrawal from

Syrian and Lebanese occupied territories, based on the option of a comprehensive settlement of all aspects of the Middle East crisis, in a way that will strengthen peace and stability for all the peoples of the region.

Tunisia, under the leadership of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, puts the Palestinian question at the top of its priorities and concerns. This steadfast, principled attitude affirms my country's position vis-à-vis the Palestinian people in their just struggle to regain their national rights and establish an independent State on their own land. We reiterate our support for all efforts that seek a just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in a manner that can guarantee the return of the occupied Arab territories, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy and the terms of reference of the peace process, including the Arab Peace Initiative.

Tunisia therefore reiterates its commitment, as a peace-loving country that respects international law and believes in humanity's values and ideals, to pursuing all efforts to put an end to this long-standing crisis and to the suffering of a people deprived for decades of the exercise of their basic rights. We hope to achieve concrete measures that can realize the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to attain freedom and sovereignty on their national soil, to regain all occupied Arab territories and to achieve peace for all peoples of the region. That alone will eliminate all tensions and initiate a new era of stability and peace.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): I congratulate you warmly, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month. I also take this opportunity to extend my delegation's sincere congratulations to the new members of the Council — Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Gabon, Lebanon and Nigeria — and to wish them every success in upholding their responsibility to fulfil their duties over the next two years. Likewise, my warm appreciation goes to the outgoing members of the Council: Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Croatia, Libya and Viet Nam.

One year ago, Gaza faced an all-out attack, the so-called Operation Cast Lead. During that barbaric operation, the Israeli regime killed or maimed thousands of besieged innocent Palestinians, including women and children, and wilfully and systematically targeted civilian infrastructure and facilities. Even the United Nations was not spared the Israeli atrocities, as the compound of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East was deliberately shelled by the Israeli army. There is no doubt that the Israeli acts in Gaza amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Almost one year has passed since then but, despite all efforts on the part of the United Nations, there is still no prospect of justice for the victims. The Israeli regime continues to defy the will of the international community and persists in the Palestinian blockade, causing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

These violations of international norms and principles are not limited only to Gaza. The persistent assault against the Islamic and Christian holy places in Jerusalem, the continued construction of the separation wall, the excavation work in and around the holy mosque, the revocation of Palestinian residency rights in the city, the forced eviction of Palestinian families from the city and the imposition of severe restrictions on movement are but some of the illegal acts carried out by the Israeli regime in the West Bank. Despite strong international condemnation, illegal settlements are being expanded much faster than in the past, and more and more Palestinian houses are being demolished. The illegal decision to build new housing units is a move undoubtedly geared at altering the demographic composition and architectural, cultural and religious character of the Palestinian territories, particularly in Jerusalem and its surrounding areas.

On 5 November 2009, the General Assembly adopted its resolution 64/10 on the follow-up to the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict. That resolution constitutes an important step forward in remedying the violations of the Israeli regime in Gaza, so vividly authenticated in the Goldstone report (A/HRC/12/48). We expect the necessary action to be taken by the relevant bodies of the United Nations, including the Security Council, in order to put an end to the culture of impunity for Israeli war crimes and crimes against humanity. If criminals were brought to justice, room for criminal acts by those who possess the motives and the madness to commit them would be restricted. Impunity for perpetrators of

crimes of a grave nature is, in itself, a cause of and an incentive for further atrocities.

Unfortunately, it seems that, for certain members of this Council, the lives of the Palestinians and their long suffering under the occupation and suppression do not count, as the massacre of hundreds of Palestinians, including dozens of women and children, is not worthy of the least consideration, let alone meaningful firm action. That is true with regard to the illegal detention of more than 11,000 Palestinians, including hundreds of women and children. Certain members of the Council are used to giving long speeches on human rights, and yet their true stance was revealed by the result of the voting in the General Assembly on resolution 64/10 on the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Israel in Gaza. That is a clear example of double standards, which is detrimental to the cause of justice and human rights.

We hope that in the next few months, when United Nations bodies endeavour to follow up on the Goldstone report on the atrocities committed by the Israeli regime in Gaza, we will see them revisit their unwavering and unconditional support for the Israeli regime.

The Israeli regime has persisted in its aggressive and expansionist policies towards Lebanon by constantly violating its land, sea and airspace and by refusing to withdraw from Lebanese occupied land in Shab'a, the Kafr Shuba hills and the northern part of Ghajar village. It also continues its occupation of the occupied Syrian Golan. That regime should immediately and fully withdraw from those occupied territories, in compliance with the most basic principles of international law and the United Nations Charter.

The question of Palestine is the most urgent issue that the international community continues to face, and it needs swift and comprehensive attention. Undoubtedly, attaining a peaceful and just settlement of the question of Palestine is imperative for the realization of comprehensive and lasting peace and stability in the Middle East and beyond. Occupation, aggression, State terrorism, expulsion, intimidation, the setting up of new settlements, the construction of the separation wall and attempts to change the demographic and cultural identity of the occupied land will not bring peace in the Middle East. Those are undoubtedly most serious and gross violations of United Nations resolutions, especially Security Council resolutions, and must therefore be dealt with urgently and appropriately by the Council and other United Nations bodies in a resolute and decisive manner.

In conclusion, in our view, a lasting peace in Palestine and the region will be possible through justice and by ending discrimination and the occupation of Palestine and other occupied territories. Today, which coincides with the first anniversary of the tragic events in Gaza, we need to act collectively to demonstrate our unqualified support for the cause of Palestine and to rally to the assistance of those who have been deprived of their rights. Lifting the blockade, starting the reconstruction of Gaza and putting an end to the illegal acts in the West Bank are among the most urgent Palestinian issues. We have a common duty and responsibility to offer multifaceted support to the Palestinians, whether in Gaza or in the West Bank. Let us hope that oppression and occupation will end and that justice and freedom will prevail in the Palestinian occupied territories.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer for the League of Arab States to the United Nations.

Mr. Mahmassani (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having allowed us to participate in today's Security Council debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, given the serious deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. I also thank Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his invaluable briefing.

There has been dangerous and unprecedented settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territories. At the end of 2009, there were more than 500,000 settlers, and that number is increasing. The Israeli occupation of the occupied Palestinian territories, the invasion of Palestinian territory by Jewish settlers and their entrenchment within that territory run counter to putting an end to the Israeli occupation and to the establishment of an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Israeli policies and practices seek to alter the physical nature and demographic composition of the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. This represents a flagrant violation of international law and endangers the situation in the region.

We are deeply concerned about Israeli policies and actions in East Jerusalem. There were no Jews there in 1967, when Israel occupied the area, but as of the end of 2009 there were 190,000 Israeli settlers in 12 settlements, and Israel had confiscated 30 per cent of the land in East Jerusalem for building settlements.

As stated by Israel, 250,000 Palestinians make up only 35 per cent of Jerusalem's population while 650,000 Israelis make up 65 per cent. Despite this, documents of the Jerusalem municipal authorities indicate that plans to double the number of Jewish inhabitants continue. In this demographic attack Israel is using population policy to ensure its control over East Jerusalem.

East Jerusalem is an integral part of the occupied Palestinian territories. Since the beginning of the occupation, in 1967, dozens of resolutions have been adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly, all of which refer to the illegality of the annexation of East Jerusalem. Israel continues with impunity to destroy the houses of Arab inhabitants, revoke their residence permits and expropriate their property in order to Judaize the city and expel its Arab inhabitants and establish more Jewish settlements in and around East Jerusalem, in flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, international humanitarian law and Security Council resolutions.

Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa mosque are in grave danger. The international community must not remain silent in the face of Israel's practices which violate the city's heritage, its attempts at manipulation and Judaization, and its violation of Christian and Muslim holy places. The excavations and archaeological work under and around the Al-Aqsa mosque and in the Silwan area could damage invaluable cultural and religious heritage and the Al-Aqsa mosque itself, as well as other sites. This could have very serious repercussions in the Arab and Muslim world and could result in endless conflict.

We call on the Council to shoulder its responsibility and use means at its disposal to compel Israel to respect international law and United Nations resolutions, end its illegal plans to Judaize Jerusalem and abide by the Fourth Geneva Convention in Jerusalem and throughout the occupied Palestinian territories.

We are concerned by the serious humanitarian crisis affecting the Palestinian people in Gaza as a result of Israel's aggression and siege against the Gaza Strip. Israel is preventing the flow of humanitarian assistance to the inhabitants and hindering the delivery of fuel and building materials for Gaza's reconstruction. Ensuring stability and a return to normalcy requires the international community to make Israel open the border crossings immediately and permanently and permit access for all essential goods, including medicines, food, fuel and commercial goods, in order to prevent an increase in poverty in the Gaza Strip.

Israel's occupation of the Arab territories is at the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For the sake of establishing peace and security, the countries of the region call for an end to Israel's culture of occupation in the Arab territories and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, in conformity with international resolutions, international law, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map. This must be achieved through negotiations with a clear mandate that would begin with an immediate halt to settlement activity, including natural growth, in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and fruitful negotiations leading to a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question and the Israeli-Arab conflict.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Keegel (Sri Lanka): Permit me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. We also extend our felicitations to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Gabon, Lebanon and Nigeria on their election to the Council. We thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs for his briefing. My delegation appreciates the opportunity given to us to once again to focus on the situation in the Middle East, particularly the Palestinian question.

Sri Lanka has consistently supported a peaceful settlement to the Palestinian issue and has called on all sides to fully implement the resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly on the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and on the realization of the two-State solution. Our hope is that the day will soon come when Israel, Palestine and their neighbours can coexist in peace and harmony.

We remain deeply concerned about the daily widespread suffering and hardships the Palestinian

people continue to endure due to the economic blockade and the ensuing grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. While we note the relaxation of some restrictions by the Israeli Government and the intention to suspend new settlement construction, we call for the removal of all restrictions. The Palestinian people have suffered for too long and continue to live under occupation.

The denial of their fundamental right to statehood due to continued Israeli occupation has seriously affected the socio-economic well-being of the population in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. In this context, my delegation believes that for peace to be viable and sustainable in the Palestinian territory, Israel must withdraw from all of the Palestinian territories back to the 1967 borders. It must end the economic blockade. The illegal expansion of settlements, construction of the separation wall and changes to the demographic character of the Palestinian territory will only increase tension and animosity throughout the Middle East region.

The Palestinian Authority needs to continue the implementation of its security plan and make every effort at its disposal to improve law and order and to ensure that its territory is not used for illegal attacks on Israeli civilians. Both sides must do everything possible to ensure the safety and security of civilians.

Sri Lanka reiterates its support for the Palestinian National Authority under the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas. We stress the need to preserve and protect the national and democratic institutions which are vital for a future independent Palestinian State. We therefore urge the Palestinian groups to act speedily to reconcile and reunite within the framework of the legitimate Palestinian National Authority. Unity among the Palestinian people is their strength.

My delegation supports international efforts for the early resumption of negotiations and believes that unity of the Palestinian people is essential to ensure proper conditions for the resumption of dialogue by Israel and Palestine at an early stage. We also urge both sides to ensure a climate conducive to the resumption of negotiations. We also hope that the Egyptian and regional initiatives will be supported by all groups in Palestine to enable elections to be held early.

In conclusion, Sri Lanka reiterates its support for a lasting peace in the Middle East, including the peaceful settlement of the Palestinian issue.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.6266

Security Council

Sixty-fifth year

Provisional

6266th meeting

Thursday, 28 January 2010, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Zhang Yesui	(China)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalic
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Moungara Mouissotsi
	Japan	Mr. Okuda
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Turkey	Mr. Apakan
	Uganda	Mr. Lukwiya
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

The situation in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia (S/2009/684)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia (S/2009/684)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Somalia, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Duale (Somalia) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2010/49, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by France, Turkey, Uganda, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of members of the Council to document S/2009/684, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, China, France, Gabon, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1910 (2010).

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 10.15 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.6267

Security Council

Sixty-fifth year

6267th meeting

Thursday, 28 January 2010, 10.15 a.m.
New York

President	Mr. Zhang Yesui (China)
Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
France	Mr. Araud
Gabon	Mr. Mounoumga Mounoumga
Japan	Mr. Okuda
Lebanon	Mr. Salam
Mexico	Mr. Heller
Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
Turkey	Mr. Apakan
Uganda	Mr. Lukwiya
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire

Twenty-third progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (S/2010/35)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire

Twenty-third progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (S/2010/15)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Côte d'Ivoire, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Bailly (Côte d'Ivoire) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2010/41, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by France.

I wish to draw the attention of members of the Council to document S/2010/15, which contains the twenty-third progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire. I also wish to draw the attention of Council members to documents S/2009/694, which contains a letter dated 29 December 2009 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, and S/2010/42, which contains a letter dated 15 January 2010 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, China, France, Gabon, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1911 (2010).

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.6268

Security Council

Sixty-fifth year

Provisional

6268th meeting

Friday, 5 February 2010, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Araud	(France)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Gabon	Mr. Moungara Moussotsi
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. Apakan
	Uganda	Mr. Lukwiya
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Ms. DiCarlo

Agenda

Briefing by the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the retiring President

The President (*spoke in French*): As this is the first meeting of the Security Council in the month of February, on behalf of the Council I should like to thank Ambassador Zhang Yesui, Permanent Representative of China, and his entire team for their service in the presidency of the Council for the month of January 2010.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Briefing by the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Kanat Saudabayev, Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Secretary of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Kanat Saudabayev and invite him to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Kanat Saudabayev, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Saudabayev (*spoke in Russian*): It is a great pleasure for me to appear before the Council not only as the head of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, but also as the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). I would like to thank the United Nations and its Security Council for their close ongoing attention to the activities of the OSCE.

It is well known that the OSCE, with its 56 participating States, is the largest security structure in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian regions. The unanimous decision of all 56 OSCE participating States to nominate the Republic of Kazakhstan to their chairmanship was an objective acknowledgement of the impressive accomplishments of our people, in the short span of our independence, in the social, economic and political development of our country under the outstanding leadership of our first President, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev.

We further believe that their decision was no less important for the organization itself as it is now, for the first time, chaired by a Central Asian State and a post-Soviet Republic. Much of the current OSCE momentum stems from the emergence of the Asian sector. The OSCE has thus demonstrated its overall desire to bring the countries to the east and to the west of Vienna closer together and to adapt itself to present-day realities.

In his address to a meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna on 14 January 2010, President Nazarbayev outlined the strategy and priorities of Kazakhstan's chairmanship-in-office of the OSCE. Above all, we will be firmly wedded to the fundamental principles and values of the OSCE. The current chairmanship sees its main task as promoting full compliance with the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter and the Helsinki Final Act. We also intend to work to strengthen the OSCE in every possible way and to enhance its effectiveness and its ability to respond adequately to emerging challenges and threats.

During our chairmanship, we are determined to promote a balance between all three OSCE baskets — political and military, economic and environmental, and human — which will help to address not only the symptoms but also the causes of security-related problems.

To a great extent, the implementation of our priorities will depend on our ability to overcome the unfortunate crisis of trust created by the dividing lines and vestiges of the cold war that still exist in the OSCE area. In this regard, we attach high hopes to the continuation of the Corfu process, which has revealed general dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs in the organization's zone of responsibility. We intend to strengthen the role of the OSCE in the European security architecture. In this context, we agree that there is a need to discuss the Russian Federation's initiative regarding a treaty on European security.

The OSCE should become a meaningful platform for common security in its zone of responsibility. A relevant dialogue will provide us with an opportunity to strengthen the OSCE's relations with the United Nations, in accordance with the 1999 Platform for Cooperative Security. We count on the contribution of the United Nations and its structures to this process.

Kazakhstan, as a recognized leader in the worldwide process of non-proliferation, will seek to increase the OSCE's contribution to achieving the goals of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). We commend the outcomes of the Security Council summit on nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament held in September, which unanimously adopted resolution 1887 (2009).

As the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, we welcome the talks between the Russian Federation and the United States on a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. We express our hope for a successful global nuclear security summit and this year's Review Conference of States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

We reaffirm the OSCE's commitment to preserving the European regime of conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures. It is our hope that, in 2010, there will be progress towards the entry into force of the Agreement on the Adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe.

At the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Athens, the participating States agreed to deepen cooperation in combating terrorism, the accumulation and proliferation of small arms and light weapons, illegal migration, and trafficking in weapons, drugs and people. The OSCE is ready to contribute to the efforts of the United Nations on those tracks and to identify new ways to increase added value.

The upcoming conference on the prevention of terrorism, to be held in Astana in October, will be a tangible contribution to the efforts to address transnational threats and challenges, including terrorism, religious extremism, illicit drug trafficking and organized crime. The OSCE will continue to promote among its participating States the ratification of relevant United Nations conventions and the implementation of Security Council resolutions, such as those on combating terrorism, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and small arms and light weapons.

Kazakhstan will make an effort to contribute, to the best of its abilities, to the resolution of protracted conflicts, three of which are in the post-Soviet area. Given the history and cultural affinities shared among Kazakhstan and all the parties to the conflicts, as well as the high standing and trust enjoyed by President Nazarbayev within the Commonwealth of Independent States, we hope to lend some impetus to the efforts of all our partners involved in that complex process.

That will be the purpose of my visit, in my capacity as OSCE Chairman-in-Office, to the southern Caucasus, scheduled for 15 February, where the OSCE and the United Nations, together with the European Union, will co-chair the Geneva talks. Further close coordination among all three parties is of great importance to efforts to promote stability in the conflicts in the southern Caucasus and in the establishment of conditions conducive to their peaceful settlement.

In Kosovo, in the course of 2010, the OSCE mission will continue to implement its mandate as an integral part of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, pursuant to resolution 1244 (1999). The OSCE commends the outcomes of the regional conference of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, held in Sarajevo on 14 December 2009, which adopted the Regional Strategy of Intercultural Dialogue and Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe.

The strengthening of coordination between the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, and OSCE field presence seems to be a promising area of interaction in the Central Asian region. Overall, the monitoring and identification of any signals or portents of the potential escalation of protracted conflicts, as well as the use of preventive mechanisms of political consultations in the OSCE framework, will become a key tool during our chairmanship.

We believe that a more efficient use of capabilities of such organizations as the OSCE would help the United Nations and its Security Council to more effectively prevent potential security threats and respond to them. The OSCE and other regional intergovernmental organizations, with their unique

resources and advantages and good understanding of the situation on the ground, play an important role in the security area. This point was highlighted at the thematic debate of the Security Council in January under the Chinese presidency, which produced a fruitful exchange of views on advancing cooperation of the United Nations with regional and subregional organizations in the maintenance of global peace and security.

A top priority for the Chairman-in-Office is, of course, further involvement of the OSCE in the stabilization of Afghanistan. We plan to focus the organization's efforts on a better protection of Afghanistan's borders with its Central Asian neighbours, including through the training of Afghan personnel at the OSCE Border Management Staff College in Tajikistan and the OSCE State Customs Service Training Centre in Kyrgyzstan.

Throughout these years, our country has actively supported the International Security Assistance Force. On 29 December 2009, we signed an agreement on land transit of NATO cargo. Such agreements have been signed with Spain, Germany, the United States and France. At the same time, Kazakhstan is convinced that it is impossible to ensure that country's transition to a peaceful and constructive life through military means alone. The time has come for a major expansion of the human dimension of our common efforts, as confirmed by the outcomes of the London Conference on Afghanistan.

That is why Kazakhstan has allocated, over the past several years, $4 million towards the reconstruction of schools, hospitals and roads; provided substantial food and other humanitarian assistance; and made a $1-million contribution to a special Islamic solidarity fund, part of which will be used for Afghanistan's rehabilitation. We are also ready to provide wheat, mineral fertilizers, agricultural equipment, construction material and other goods.

In this regard, we call on international donors to use Kazakhstan's significant potential in this regard. The training of national personnel is essential to the rehabilitation of Afghanistan and its future. This year, we will begin implementing a Kazakh-Afghan agreement that provides for the training of 1,000 Afghan professionals at Kazakhstan's educational establishments. Despite the repercussions of the global financial crisis, Kazakhstan has allocated $50 million for that purpose.

In general, Kazakhstan intends to fully use the capabilities and the potential of the OSCE. Close interaction between our organization and the United Nations, which is the main coordinator of international operations in Afghanistan, is in our common interests. All OSCE initiatives will be implemented in full coordination with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and other entities.

As its current Chairman-in-Office, Kazakhstan will also attach great importance to the development of the OSCE's economic and environmental dimension, while emphasizing the achievement of modest yet tangible results and adding genuine value. In the framework of the second basket, we intend to focus on the development of the Eurasian region's transit-transport potential and continental transport corridors, which, we are convinced, will contribute to efforts by participating States to overcome the global crisis.

The issue of environmental security in the OSCE region is extremely important. In that regard, the tragedy of the Aral Sea poses a critical challenge. In that context, our efforts will focus on close cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia.

There is potential for cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations in the important new area of energy security. In Athens, OSCE participating States agreed to intensify dialogue on energy security issues, including consultations with relevant international and regional organizations in order to define a complementary role for the OSCE.

We intend to continue to attach great importance to the third basket of the OSCE's agenda — the human dimension. Respect for and the protection of people's fundamental rights and freedoms, the development of democracy and combating all types of intolerance and discrimination are all integral parts of comprehensive security.

Drawing on our highly positive experience in ensuring lasting peace and understanding in our country, which includes more than 140 nationalities professing 46 faiths, Kazakhstan intends to make tolerance and intercultural dialogue a top priority of our chairmanship. That will be the central topic of the

OSCE high-level conference on tolerance and discrimination, which is scheduled to be held in Astana from 29 to 30 June 2010. That issue is especially topical in the light of the declaration of the year 2010 as the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures.

In the context of human rights and fundamental freedoms, it is imperative to ensure effective synergy between OSCE activities and the work of other international organizations — first and foremost the United Nations, the Human Rights Council and the Council of Europe — and their extensive system of international legal instruments. In particular, the OSCE expects close cooperation with the relevant structures of the United Nations system on issues pertaining to gender equality and the rule of law.

Finally, as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, the OSCE continues to be a source of experience for other regional organizations. Over the past two years, the OSCE has shared its experience with the African Union, the League of the Arab States and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia of the Regional Forum of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. In the coming months, our organization will continue its active dialogue with its Asian and Mediterranean partners for cooperation, including Japan, which currently has a seat in the Security Council. In 2009, the OSCE welcomed Australia as its twelfth partner for cooperation, reflecting the organization's intention to broaden dialogue with partners beyond its area of responsibility in order to maintain international peace and security.

Kazakhstan's chairmanship in 2010 will coincide with a number of important dates, including the thirty-fifth anniversary of the conclusion of the Helsinki Final Act, the sixty-fifth anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the twentieth anniversary of both the Charter of Paris for a New Europe and the Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension. It will also mark 11 years since the holding of the last OSCE summit, in Istanbul.

Regrettably, the first decade of this new century has not made our world a safer or better place. The tragedy of 11 September 2001 changed our common understanding of war. International terrorism has presented the world with an enemy without address or citizenship. The security architecture of Europe has changed. Despite long-standing efforts, Afghanistan continues to be a source of international terrorism and a main supplier of illicit narcotics. Not only have protracted conflicts not been resolved, but regrettably, new ones have emerged. All of us have witnessed the most serious financial crisis to affect the world. Even in the prosperous countries of Europe, inter-ethnic and inter-faith tolerance has declined.

All of these issues are within the scope of the OSCE's area of responsibility. These acute problems require the concerted attention of the leaders of the OSCE's participating States. It is for that reason that President Nursultan Nazarbayev has proposed holding an OSCE summit in 2010. Concrete recommendations for the summit have been put forward in the documents of the Athens ministerial meetings and endorsed by the Permanent Council in Vienna. Leaders from a variety of States — including France, the Holy See, Italy, Turkey, the Russian Federation and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and Spain — have both backed that proposal and become actively involved in the preparations for the summit.

This year, Kazakhstan also intends to continue the sound tradition established by our predecessor Greece of inviting ministers for foreign affairs from OSCE participating States to an informal meeting at Almaty to continue our free exchange of views on topical issues and, ideally, to achieve consensus on the agenda and date for the summit. We are convinced that the convening of the summit fully responds to the noble objective and ongoing efforts of the international community as a whole to ensure comprehensive, indivisible and lasting security at the global level and to strengthen trust and cooperation among States.

I take this opportunity afforded to me today as Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE to appeal to the members of the Security Council to demonstrate strategic far-sightedness and political leadership in supporting the convening of the summit, which would open up a new era in the development of one of today's major regional organizations.

In conclusion, I note that, over the 35 years of our existence, the OSCE has established an unparalleled system of collective, comprehensive and indivisible security. Unfortunately, as President Nursultan Nazarbayev has noted, the positive historical resources

of the OSCE have their limits. Today, it is simply not possible to endlessly draw so-called red lines and play zero-sum games.

First and foremost, there is a need to improve the effectiveness of international organizations to meet new global challenges. In the light of new threats and challenges, our common objective is to make the OSCE even more relevant, useful and effective. In that regard, President Nursultan Nazarbayev's vision for Kazakhstan's chairmanship of the OSCE is most appropriate. He advocates the four Ts of trust, traditions, transparency and tolerance. The focus of our chairmanship-in-office is to improve interaction and complementarity between the OSCE and the United Nations in various fields. We genuinely hope to have the support and cooperation of the Security Council, and of the Organization as a whole.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Kanat Saudabayev for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to welcome Mr. Kanat Saudabayev, Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Secretary of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan. We are grateful for his comprehensive statement.

The priorities of the Kazakh chairmanship-in-office of the OSCE that have been described to the Security Council are a sound basis for the implementation of objectives that we hope will take that organization to a qualitatively new level. All of us want the OSCE to become a more effective organization that meets the interests of all its participating States. We welcome Kazakhstan's initiative to convene an OSCE summit in 2010. The Chairman-in-office's intention to include on its agenda such issues as current problems of European security and tolerance is worthy of support.

From our point of view, we would like to highlight a number of key issues on the OSCE's agenda to which Russia intends to give special attention in 2010, including within the framework of the Corfu discussions. Among these are the development of dialogue on military-political issues, including confidence- and security-building measures, modernizing the 1999 Vienna Document on confidence-building measures and the fight against terrorism and the drug threat.

The next task is to reform the OSCE and to shift all of its work to a clear, collectively agreed normative basis, including adopting a charter for the organization; streamlining the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and its field missions; countering neo-fascism and xenophobia; protecting the rights of national minorities; agreeing common principles for conflict management; and dialogue on freedom of movement and liberalizing visa regimes.

The Russian Federation supports multilateral development and improved cooperation with the United Nations, its Security Council and regional and subregional mechanisms, among which the OSCE occupies an important position. Such coordination must be based on the firm foundation of the Charter of the United Nations and its Chapter VIII in particular, taking into account the comparative advantages inherent in the global Organization and its mechanisms. What is unalterable here is respect for the Security Council's lead role in the responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.

As a regional mechanism, the OSCE has established close and fruitful cooperation with the United Nations in a whole range of key areas, first and foremost of which are security and the settlement of regional conflicts. The primary mission of the OSCE is to ensure equal and indivisible security for all participating States. We believe that this key postulate of the Charter for European Security has yet to be fulfilled. In this context, Russia is eager to create conditions such that no country would be able to promote its own security at the expense of another's.

We hope that the conception of the Kazakhstan chairmanship's work, as Mr. Saudabayev has presented it today, will help us to overcome the crisis situations encountered by the OSCE in the last few years and to adapt it to the world's new realities. Russia is ready to cooperate constructively with the Kazakh chairmanship-in-office and all other participating States on these issues.

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): At the outset, let me welcome and congratulate Mr. Kanat Saudabayev, Secretary of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, on his assumption of the chairmanship-in-office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation

in Europe (OSCE). I also thank him warmly for his briefing today on Kazakhstan's priorities for the OSCE in 2010.

The election of Kazakhstan to the chairmanship of the OSCE is clearly a result of the progress made by that country in building a stable, steadily developing modern State, as well as of its contributions to regional and global peace and security, such as the shut-down of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site and the voluntary renunciation of the world's fourth largest nuclear missile arsenal.

Kazakhstan's chairmanship of the OSCE, 35 years after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, is also a sign that the Eurasian-Atlantic area has been unified under common principles and values. It also demonstrates that, within that organization, the thin line between East and West is completely fading away, and that the OSCE is truly becoming a single security space and a unique platform for dialogue among 56 countries sharing similar perspectives.

In this context, we believe that the OSCE still has a key role to play, and that its comprehensive concept of security will continue to make significant contributions to defusing conflicts and differences in Eurasia. Indeed, as the largest regional security organization in the Eurasian-Atlantic area, and based on the concept of cooperative security, which emphasizes the need for increased cooperation among participating States for common security, the OSCE is relevant under today's prevailing conditions and requirements.

Close cooperation with the United Nations is undoubtedly crucial to meeting those requirements. Turkey believes that the Kazakhstan chairmanship's theme of four Ts — trust, tradition, transparency and tolerance — is a valuable guideline for progress for the OSCE. In the same vein, in order to foster debate and achieve tangible results, we share the chairmanship's concern that there has not been an OSCE summit since the last one Turkey hosted in Istanbul in 1999. We thus support Kazakhstan in its aim of holding a new summit later this year, including by helping to meet any logistical or organizational needs. The summit will surely provide an opportunity for reflecting on the future of peace and security in Eurasia and mark symbolically the anniversaries of such historic milestones in this process as the end of the Second World War, the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter. In this regard, we endorse the intention of the Kazakh chairmanship to strengthen the role of the OSCE in Europe's security structure. We will closely follow and contribute to the development of the renewed dialogue format known as the Corfu process.

We also share the chairmanship's priorities of deepening cooperation on combating terrorism, cross-border trafficking in weapons, drugs and people; increasing the OSCE's contribution to achieving the goals of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004); and its efforts to contribute to the resolution of protracted conflicts. In particular, we welcome the initiative to host, in October in Astana, a conference on the prevention of terrorism.

Turkey also attaches great importance to regional initiatives to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan, and in this regard welcomes Kazakhstan's intention of increasing OSCE involvement in order to ensure that country's transition to a peaceful future and to focus on better protection of Afghanistan's borders with Central Asian countries.

Let me conclude by once again saluting Kazakhstan on its assumption of the chairmanship of the OSCE and wishing it every success in this new responsibility. Turkey will assist Kazakhstan in this endeavour, both bilaterally and within the framework of our presidency of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, which we will be assuming from Kazakhstan in June, building together a bridge between the two organizations and contributing to a truly comprehensive approach to security in Eurasia.

Ms. DiCarlo (United States of America): I would like to welcome Foreign Minister Saudabayev to the Council and congratulate him on assuming the chairmanship-in-office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). I thank him for his comprehensive briefing. The United States would like to assure him of our full cooperation during the coming year.

At our open debate last month (see S/PV.6257), we discussed the critical importance of the United Nations coordinating conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding efforts with regional organizations. We welcome the important partnership between the OSCE and the United Nations, which has allowed both organizations to exploit their comparative advantages in order to strengthen regional and

international peace and security. Today, I would like to highlight a few important examples of this cooperation.

United Nations-OSCE cooperation in the Balkans has been exemplary. In Kosovo, the OSCE served as a critical pillar in the United Nations mission, promoting democracy and governance. Just as the United Nations has reconfigured its mission and refocused its efforts in Kosovo, the OSCE has adjusted its own role as part of the overall international effort. The successful municipal elections held in Kosovo last year were the first democratic elections in the country held without the assistance of the OSCE. Local and international observers confirmed that the elections adhered to democratic standards. They were testament to the excellent work of the OSCE in helping the people of Kosovo build up their own democratic institutions.

Regarding Georgia, the OSCE plays an important role, along with the United Nations and the European Union, in supporting dialogue through the Geneva process. The United States urges all parties to participate in the Geneva process actively and pragmatically and to make full use of agreed-upon measures to prevent and respond to incidents that could increase tensions. We must continue to work toward the re-establishment of an OSCE presence in Georgia and a long-term, peaceful resolution of the conflict. The United States once again expresses its support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

We welcome and encourage the continuing close cooperation of the OSCE with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. The OSCE has drawn on its vast experience in securing and managing borders, training police and promoting democratic elections to assist the Government and people of Afghanistan in strengthening the rule of law. During and following last year's presidential and provincial council elections, the OSCE shared its expertise on ways to improve the electoral process with Afghan leaders.

We agree with the findings of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights that deep and sustained reform is required to enhance the Afghan Government's ability and credibility in conducting future elections. We would encourage Afghanistan and the OSCE to explore further cooperation in that area and in areas such as advancing gender equality and human rights and training for parliamentarians.

Further, we commend the commitment of the Chairman-in-Office to promoting the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) as part of the global effort to address nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We also welcome the commitment of the OSCE to implementing other Security Council resolutions on terrorism, protecting civilians and combating sexual violence in conflict zones.

We note that the Chairman has stressed the importance of addressing environmental threats. We remain committed to working with all participating States on those challenges, including climate change and energy security. Diverse and reliable energy supplies are important for the security of Europe, and the OSCE, with its comprehensive approach to security, is well placed to highlight the links between energy and security. The United States has suggested developing new mechanisms through which any potential supply disruptions could be effectively dealt with on a political level.

Finally, we support the continuing efforts under OSCE auspices to resolve the dispute over Nagorny Karabakh and to bring all concerned parties to consensus on the future of Moldova's Transdniestria region. We will continue to work with other participating States in the Corfu process and to strengthen our ability to address security challenges in Europe and to prevent new conflicts from arising.

The United States encourages the continued dialogue and deepening cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE. We applaud the OSCE for its many important efforts to date.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): At the outset, let me welcome His Excellency Mr. Kanat Saudabayev, Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) in Europe and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, to the Council today. We congratulate Kazakhstan on the assumption of the chairmanship of the world's largest security organization at a decisive moment in its history.

Let me thank the Minister for the presentation of the programme of work and the priorities of the Kazakh Chairmanship-in-Office for the coming year. Leadership of that important organization comes with great challenges and responsibilities. That is even more true now that the organization has embarked on the Corfu process for a European security dialogue in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian regions. As a participating

State and as host country of the organization, Austria would like to assure Kazakhstan of its full support in the efforts to promote the OSCE agenda and for the endeavours of Kazakhstan to ensure that all three dimensions of the organization's work are given equal attention.

Last month the Security Council once again underlined the importance of cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter. The OSCE has over the years played an active role supporting the implementation of United Nations principles in various horizontal issues such as counter-terrorism, the fight against trafficking in human beings, drugs and weapons, and the promotion of human rights, the rule of law and democracy. We are pleased that United Nations representatives will be invited to address the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna this year. In that context we also very much appreciate the personal interest of the Secretary-General in increasing cooperation and personal contacts with the OSCE.

The OSCE institutions and field missions significantly contribute to narrowing the security gaps that exist in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian regions. The election observation missions carried out by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the OSCE field missions operating in participating States foster democratic stability and security in close cooperation with relevant United Nations agencies and missions.

In view of Kazakhstan's geographic and historical proximity, we deem it particularly well placed to bringing the protracted conflicts in the region closer to a peaceful solution. In that regard we highly appreciate the early personal engagement of the Chairman-in-Office and of his Special Representative, Ambassador Nurgaliyev. Moreover, we welcome the intention of the Kazakh chairmanship to advance the organization's contribution to non-proliferation in connection with the 1540 regime and to the protection of the Afghan borders. Both issues are crucial for the region's security and deserve our full commitment.

Let me assure the Minister that we fully share his very positive assessment of the work of the OSCE, both the Border Management Staff College in Tajikistan and the Customs Service Training Centre in Kyrgyzstan. There are also very useful synergies between the activities of those institutions and the work of the European Union (EU) in the field of border management.

The OSCE role in Kosovo continues to be an important example for the complementarity of United Nations, OSCE and EU crisis-management efforts. Austria would like to commend the OSCE Mission in Kosovo for the intensive work and coordination with other international stakeholders in the successful organization of the recent municipal elections in Kosovo.

We appreciate the proposal by the Government of Kazakhstan to convene an OSCE summit later this year. I have listened very carefully and with sympathy to the suggestions made by the Minister as to the preparation of such an event. As the Austrian Foreign Minister, Michael Spindelegger, assured the Minister on his visit to Vienna in January, Austria stands ready to contribute to the necessary preparations in order to produce substantive progress on issues such as the protracted conflicts, the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty regime, energy security, non-proliferation and the promotion of human rights, which would be very important.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome His Excellency Mr. Kanat Saudabayev, Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, to the Security Council and thank him for his briefing on the activities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). I wish Kazakhstan success during its chairmanship of the OSCE.

While the Security Council bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, it must strengthen its cooperation with regional and subregional organizations. That is an important way by which the international community can unite efforts to respond to crises and challenges. China supports the strengthening of cooperation between the Security Council and regional and subregional organizations on the basis of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

Last month the Security Council organized a thematic debate on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security and issued a presidential statement (S/PRST/2010/1) in which the importance and necessity of the United Nations

carrying out mutually reinforcing and complementary cooperation was reaffirmed.

Today's briefing by the Foreign Minister Saudabayev to the Security Council on the activities of the OSCE will help to strengthen communication and coordination between the Security Council and the OSCE and will improve the effectiveness of cooperation in maintaining international peace and security. We hope that during Kazakhstan's chairmanship of the OSCE, the organization will be able to fully utilize its advantages and resources to promote a more effective and active role in maintaining regional peace, stability and security.

Mr. Parham (United Kingdom): I would like to join Security Council colleagues in welcoming the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, His Excellency Mr. Kanat Saudabayev, to the Council today. May I also thank him for his full briefing, setting out the priorities of Kazakhstan as Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) during 2010. He is very welcome at the Council here today.

This year marks a significant milestone for Kazakhstan. The prestigious role of Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE brings with it important responsibilities to promote and embody the principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy, good governance and the rule of law on which the OSCE is founded. The spotlight will inevitably fall on how well Kazakhstan meets those commitments. This is a key opportunity for Kazakhstan to show itself as a regional leader and a prominent international player.

We look forward to working with Kazakhstan to deliver progress on the key issues facing the OSCE, most notably the discussion on the future of European security, the protracted conflicts in Moldova and the Caucasus, and promoting human rights and democratization. Those are issues that are important not just to the OSCE but to the United Nations as well.

We welcome Kazakhstan's focus on the Corfu process, which has firmly anchored the dialogue on the future of European security in the OSCE. That is right, given the OSCE's wide membership and mandate. Moreover, it is important that security is interpreted widely and includes issues such as energy security, human rights and good governance, alongside hard security issues. The Corfu process must cover all three OSCE dimensions, reflecting the interdependencies that require a comprehensive approach to European security.

The protracted conflicts remain a top priority. Unresolved issues in Moldova, Nagorny Karabakh and Georgia have engaged the OSCE's attention for many years. We commend the effort and energy that Mr. Saudabayev and his Special Representative, Mr. Nurgaliyev, have invested to bring together the various parties, and we look forward to progress during 2010. The OSCE's engagement in South-East Europe is testament to what can be done to help resolve complex problems involving national minorities, although, in this region too, there remains scope for doing more.

On Georgia, we remain committed to the principle of an OSCE presence as part of a much needed international scrutiny of the conflict, and reflecting the OSCE's status as a co-Chair of the Geneva talks. We urge Kazakhstan to continue to explore all options that would enable a re-established OSCE presence in Georgia, including in the region of South Ossetia. We remain committed to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

We commend Kazakhstan's intention to enhance the OSCE's engagement with Afghanistan, one of its partners for cooperation. We agree that more can be done to strengthen border security between Afghanistan and the OSCE States in that region — Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Finally, we note the importance that Kazakhstan attaches to holding an OSCE summit during its chairmanship. As OSCE Ministers agreed in December 2009, if there is to be a summit, it will require adequate preparation in terms of both substance and modalities.

As Foreign Minister Saudabayev highlighted in his briefing, the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law are at the heart of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security. We welcome the Foreign Minister's confirmation of the continued importance of that human dimension in the OSCE's agenda. We also welcome his pledge on 14 January to pursue further political liberalization, and we look forward to further progress on Kazakhstan's domestic reforms.

We will continue to support Kazakhstan's efforts towards meeting their OSCE commitments, as well as their forthcoming challenges as Chair.

Mr. Barbalić (Bosnia and Herzegovina): At the outset, let me welcome and thank His Excellency Minister Saudabayev for his briefing on the plans of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for 2010. We also join the rest of the Council members in congratulating him as well as Kazakhstan on its chairmanship for the current year. Our delegation welcomes the core objectives that the OSCE has envisioned for this year. For the purpose of brevity, though, allow me to make only a few comments.

First, we are particularly encouraged by the organization's efforts to further enhance its cooperation with the United Nations in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter. Bosnia and Herzegovina is particularly aware of the benefits, as well as the complexities, that such cooperation entails in the post-conflict period in terms of democratization, the establishment of a functional and independent election administration system, education, human rights and regional security cooperation. One such challenging effort, for instance, still remains with regard to the maintenance of surplus weapons.

Secondly, strengthening the aforementioned cooperation, moreover, can and must lead to tackling and combating terrorism. At the same time, such cooperation can, in addition, work towards the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction at the global level. In that context, the OSCE's forthcoming coordination of efforts with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, as well as with other United Nations agencies, becomes especially relevant.

Thirdly, it is noteworthy that the Corfu process will continue throughout 2010. Such informal meetings at the ministerial level should further reinvigorate regional dialogue, as well as trust, in accordance with the OSCE norms and principles regarding security on the continent and beyond. We look forward to more information on the specifics of the agenda.

In closing, let us return to our remarks on education. As some OSCE-driven educational programmes have already shown in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 2002, education remains an important tool for enhancing security. Keeping that in mind, our delegation would like to welcome educational efforts that the OSCE plans to foster under the chairmanship in 2010.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): We are honoured to welcome in the Council today the Secretary of State and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan and Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), His Excellency Mr. Kanat Saudabayev. I thank him for his presentation, and I salute Kazakhstan on assuming the leadership of such an important organization.

As early as last month, in its first presidential statement of 2010 (S/PRST/2010/1), the Security Council reiterated the importance of cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations. The collaboration between the United Nations and the OSCE is a concrete example of a partnership that has helped to strengthen international peace and security. We commend the work carried out by the OSCE, particularly its activities in promoting political dialogue and in strengthening national capacities in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

We also note the OSCE efforts in enhancing the capacity of Afghanistan to manage its borders with its Central Asian neighbours. We appreciate and encourage the close coordination of the OSCE with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

We also acknowledge the role played by the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre in early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. It is critical that the cooperation between the United Nations and organizations such as the OSCE extend to all phases of a conflict. In this context, we welcome the priorities outlined by Kazakhstan for its OSCE chairmanship, and we note in particular the importance attached to a balanced approach to all three OSCE baskets — political and military, economic and environmental, and human — with a view to addressing not only the symptoms but also the root causes of security-related problems.

We look forward to the continued cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE in the maintenance of international peace and security, and we wish Kazakhstan a very successful chairmanship.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): I would like to welcome Mr. Kanat Saudabayev, Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, to the Council, thank him for his comprehensive and insightful briefing, and congratulate

him as the new Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

It is evident from the briefing that the OSCE has great responsibilities within the scope of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, and its leadership has approached those responsibilities with tremendous purposefulness. We note the OSCE's continued commitment to the founding principles of the Helsinki Final Act and the successful efforts to maintain the link between the OSCE's 56 member States on the three core issues: human security, political-military aspects of security, and economic and environmental matters.

We welcome the consistent efforts to transform the OSCE into a credible platform for common security in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian regions. We note its commitment to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to combating terrorism and other forms of transnational crime. We also note its contributions to the efforts to resolve protracted conflicts in the region and its use of mediation and political mechanisms in the process. We appreciate its achievements in environmental issues and energy security, as well as human rights.

Indeed, the effective use of the OSCE to tackle major challenges serves as a model for other regional and subregional organizations in their concerted efforts to enhance their capacities to promote comprehensive security and respect for fundamental freedoms, and to increase civil society participation.

We believe that the vision that has just been outlined assures a promising future for the organization. Yet, there are several daunting challenges that require intense engagement and dialogue. There are still protracted conflicts, border management issues and trafficking issues that should be addressed. To achieve its goals, the OSCE must remain steadfast in its commitment to its all-encompassing concept of security. It must also continue to generate confidence-building measures amongst its members and work in concert to address transnational and other long-standing threats to peace and security, including conflicts over energy and water.

The OSCE's desire to continue to strengthen its conflict-prevention capacity, seek enhanced cooperation with the Security Council, and always give equal attention to the three elements in its basket is indeed very commendable. We believe that within the context of lessons learned, the OSCE should also create opportunities for information exchange and cooperation with other regional organizations in the fight against transnational crimes.

Mr. Moungara Moussotsi (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I, too, wish to thank His Excellency Mr. Kanat Saudabayev, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan and Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), for his very detailed briefing. We congratulate him on acceding to the OSCE chairmanship and appreciate the very useful information with which he has provided us, especially concerning the OSCE's 2010 programme of work. We note with satisfaction that these activities are in synch with the goals and principles of the United Nations.

We also welcome the OSCE's activities in conflict prevention, which my country believes to be a contribution to stability and peace. Gabon favours cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations in the area of peace and conflict prevention, pursuant to Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. The OSCE's promotion of the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations also enjoys our full support. Furthermore, we welcome the OSCE's role in stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan, in cooperation with the United Nations and its agencies deployed in that country. We are also encouraged by its initiatives to promote human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rights of minorities, and by its focus on the human dimension in its activities. Its promotion of inter-ethnic dialogue and harmony, and its fight against intolerance and alls forms of discrimination, are portents of success in the quest for lasting peace in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Like the Permanent Representative of Nigeria, Gabon wishes to see close cooperation and the sharing of experiences in the area of stability and peace between the OSCE and other regional organizations, in particular those of Africa.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes in turn to welcome Mr. Kanat Saudabayev, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, and to thank him for the information he has shared with us on cooperation between the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations and on the priorities he is seeking to promote in his capacity as Chairman-in-Office of that organization.

Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter provides the appropriate framework for promoting the greater participation of regional organizations in matters related to international peace and security. Indeed, over the past two decades, the Security Council has increasingly turned to regional organizations in respect of issues of peace, security and development.

In Africa and Europe, in recent years regional organizations have shown renewed determination to address internal conflicts that can affect security on their continents, as well as to promote development. That is the important role played by the OSCE, a geographically and politically diverse entity with 19 operations of various kinds in the field.

During the month of January, the Security Council held a thematic debate on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security. At that meeting, we noted that the activities of regional organizations, with their early warning and prevention mechanisms, can prove to be decisive in the early stages of a conflict in averting larger-scale action by the international community as a whole. We also stressed that the capacity of such organizations to promote peaceful conflict resolution and their knowledge of the underlying causes of various conflicts give them a comparative advantage. We therefore welcome the OSCE efforts to prevent conflicts and to manage crisis situations and post-conflict and national reconstruction phases.

We think it is important that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is promoting among its members the ratification of the relevant United Nations instruments and the implementation of Security Council resolutions in the areas of combating terrorism and non-proliferation. That is a good practice that can be followed by other regional organizations. We also believe that the full implementation of Council resolutions on the protection of women and children should also be promoted, and we welcome the OSCE's interest in strengthening its relationship with the United Nations in the areas of protecting human rights and strengthening the rule of law.

We welcome as well the efforts made to strengthen the broad-based architecture for security cooperation among OSCE countries by pursuing the so-called Corfu process. Also in the area of security, OSCE cooperation with the relevant Security Council committees seems to us to be especially important, in particular with the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), on non-proliferation.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that this format of periodic dialogue between the Security Council and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is a model that should be explored vis-à-vis other regional and subregional organizations, all the while paying particular attention to preventive, early warning and crisis management approaches and to the areas of negotiation, mediation and conciliation, with a view to resolving regional conflicts.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I, too, would like to extend a warm welcome to the Foreign Minister, His Excellency Mr. Kanat Saudabayev, and to thank him for his useful briefing on priority issues for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). As an OSCE partner for cooperation and a good friend of Kazakhstan, Japan would like to congratulate him and say that we have high expectations of the Chairman-in-Office with regard to his proactive efforts in leading the OSCE. I wish him the best in that capacity and in his efforts to contribute to peace and stability in Europe and the entire Eurasian continent.

Security in the European region is integrally related to that of Asia and the Pacific. It is essential for the OSCE to address global threats through close cooperation between Europe and Asia. Partnership for cooperation makes a good contribution to broadening the OSCE security concerns. A significant example of such inter-reliance is the OSCE's increasing engagement in the stabilization of Afghanistan.

We are doing a lot of things for our part, including our contribution last year to five OSCE projects to improve the border security capacities of Central Asian countries having borders with Afghanistan. Such projects help to enhance peace and stability in that country as well as in the wider Central Asian region.

Japan believes that the cross-dimensional and comprehensive security agenda of the OSCE could be effectively addressed by emphasizing human security and a human-centred perspective. I have been personally involved in organizing several initiatives to promote human security in OSCE activities. Japan appreciates the strong interest and close cooperation that the OSCE has demonstrated in promoting the

human security perspective on issues such as ethnic reconciliation, the movement of people, human trafficking and environmental degradation. We endorse and strongly support Kazakhstan's priority agenda, with its strong emphasis on the human dimension.

Japan also pays tribute to the important role of the OSCE in supporting the democratization process in Eurasian regions. We have been actively cooperating in facilitating free and fair elections in many OSCE countries, including Ukraine, by sending election monitors.

I would like to emphasize the particular value of regular dialogue between the Security Council and the OSCE, which is mutually beneficial and supportive. Let me reiterate Japan's commitment to closely cooperate with the OSCE and to support the chairmanship of Kazakhstan. We hope that good preparatory work will be done for a successful summit.

Mr. Lukwiya (Uganda): My delegation also welcomes to the Council His Excellency Mr. Kanat Saudabayev, Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan. We congratulate him on his assumption of the chairmanship of the OSCE and thank him for his insightful briefing on the priorities and plans for 2010.

It is becoming increasingly clear that maintaining international peace and security is a shared responsibility in which the United Nations and other regional organizations such as the OSCE have critical roles to play. We share the view of the Minister that the productive utilization of the potential of the OSCE can complement the efforts of the United Nations, and of the Security Council in particular, in dealing with threats to international peace and security. That is why Uganda has continued to urge the United Nations to strengthen cooperation with regional and subregional organizations in order to take advantage of their respective strengths and contributions in that collective endeavour.

We welcome the progress that OSCE member States have made over the past two decades in the area of security. We also welcome the intention of the Chairman-in-Office to strengthen the role of the OSCE in the European security architecture, including the continuation of the renewed dialogue format on security in the framework of the Corfu process. We commend the Minister for his efforts, which we trust will help to strengthen partnership and cooperation in the OSCE area.

While there is an obvious need to deal with the traditional security challenges and problems that remain unresolved, attention also needs to be paid to new threats and emerging challenges. In the light of the cross-dimensional nature of security in the world, it is necessary to devise new strategies to tackle transnational threats such as terrorism, human trafficking, drugs and cybercrime. Furthermore, as pointed out at the OSCE Foreign Ministers' meeting in Athens, protracted conflicts, ethnic tensions and unresolved border disputes continue to plague parts of the OSCE area, with the potential to turn into serious crises. In addition, new threats such as energy security, illegal migration and rising instability in regions adjacent to the OSCE area, such as Afghanistan, have become potential security concerns, not only for OSCE States but for the international community as well.

We welcome the regional approach that the OSCE intends to focus on, particularly with regard to enhancing the capacity of Afghanistan to manage its borders with its Central Asian neighbours, including through the training of Afghan personnel. We are convinced that by promoting regional cooperation, opportunities for Afghanistan and the countries of the region will be greatly enhanced to deal with common security challenges, while also facilitating economic growth and development. However, coordination and the harmonization of OSCE activities with other bodies will remain crucial to avoid the duplication of efforts. We therefore welcome the OSCE's intention to undertake an initiative in full coordination with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and other United Nations entities.

We call on the OSCE to strengthen cooperation with other international organizations, and in particular to work closely with the United Nations and other regional organizations to tackle this new threat to regional and global security. We also encourage the OSCE to build linkages and share experiences with the African Union, which is already working on a comprehensive peace and security architecture for the continent. We welcome the OSCE ministerial declaration on non-proliferation, adopted in Athens in December 2009, which marks a positive step towards increasing the OSCE's contribution to achieving the goals of resolution 1540 (2004).

Finally, we thank once again the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE for his briefing on the priorities and plans for 2010.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like first to add my voice to those of my colleagues in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Saudabayev, and to thank him for his presence in our midst and for his important briefing. Allow me to make five observations.

Our meeting today is a model for enhancing the important relationship between the United Nations and the regional and subregional organizations, particularly in light of the objective discussion held in this Chamber last month emphasizing the aspects of complementarity between these organizations. Secondly, we salute the role played by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in the field of preventive diplomacy and in containing conflicts and preventing their proliferation, which adds to the comparative advantage and value of the regional and subregional organizations. Thirdly, we welcome the role undertaken by the OSCE in helping to address various crises, and in particular in supporting stabilization in Afghanistan and other areas. Fourthly, we call for dialogue and cooperation between the OSCE and its regional counterparts and subregional organizations, on the one hand, and between those organizations and the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, on the other.

Fifthly and lastly, I stress the need to improve such dialogue so that we can not only address the spread of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, but also promote human rights and the rule of law and enhance dialogue among civilizations and religions, as we shall at the high-level conference to be held in Astana, Kazakhstan, on 28 and 29 June. We stress the need to focus on education and on a framework for addressing the root causes of crises. In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm our confidence in the leadership role of Kazakhstan in all these areas.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of France.

I wish to welcome the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Mr. Kanat Saudabayev, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Secretary of State of Kazakhstan, and to thank him for his briefing. We fully share his views on the relationship between the OSCE and the United Nations, which we wish to strengthen.

France especially supports the dialogue on the future of European security in the framework of the Corfu process, mentioned by the Chairman-in-office of the OSCE. French President Nicolas Sarkozy has outlined our position on this on several occasions. We hope to see the process lead to improved security in Europe both for States and for private citizens, and including every country concerned, from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

The ideas contained in the draft treaty on European security disseminated by Russia on 30 November make an interesting contribution to this debate. The questions raised by the text correspond to those currently being examined in the framework of the Corfu process on respect for the right of every State to choose its own way of ensuring its security. In this regard, France fully supports the proposal just put forward to convene an OSCE summit this year, the objective of which should be to reaffirm the validity of our commitments under the Helsinki Final Act and our common will to prevent and solve conflicts through cooperation, to guarantee respect for human rights, and to combat common threats.

The concept of two blocs confronting each other is far behind us, but the crises continue. The OSCE must be present to resolve them and prevent others. We must work at the highest possible level to formulate a renewed security architecture in which other organizations, particularly NATO and the European Union, should also participate.

The OSCE is playing an essential role in stabilizing the borders of Afghanistan, particularly in training Afghan frontier guards. This is a good example of successful cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations, and will, we hope, be a good example of what the Kazakh chairmanship of the OSCE can contribute to the region.

It is in its global view of security and cooperation that the OSCE finds its full value. I salute the commitment of the Kazakh chairmanship to view the human dimension of the OSCE as one of the priorities on its agenda. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights must continue to play an essential role, particularly in election monitoring. Its autonomy there is its strength and must be preserved.

In conclusion, the OSCE must also work in close coordination with other international and regional organizations. The presence of the Kazakh chairmanship in the Security Council is a testament to the vitality of the cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE, which France welcomes.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to Mr. Saudabayev so that he may respond to the comments and questions raised.

Mr. Saudabayev (*spoke in Russian*): I thank you, Sir, for your kind words concerning my country and for your faith in the success of Kazakhstan's chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

I am especially grateful for the support voiced by all members of the Security Council for the proposal made by President Nazarbayev, as Head of the State chairing the OSCE this year, to convene a summit of our organization. I thank all speakers for their kind support, in-depth analysis of the situation in our zone of common responsibility, and support for the priorities of Kazakhstan's chairmanship-in-office of the OSCE.

I hope that today's meeting of the Security Council will lend new and significant impetus to the further strengthening of cooperation between the OSCE and the Council, and that it has made a worthy contribution to the noble objective of strengthening security and mutual understanding in that huge geographical area.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.